

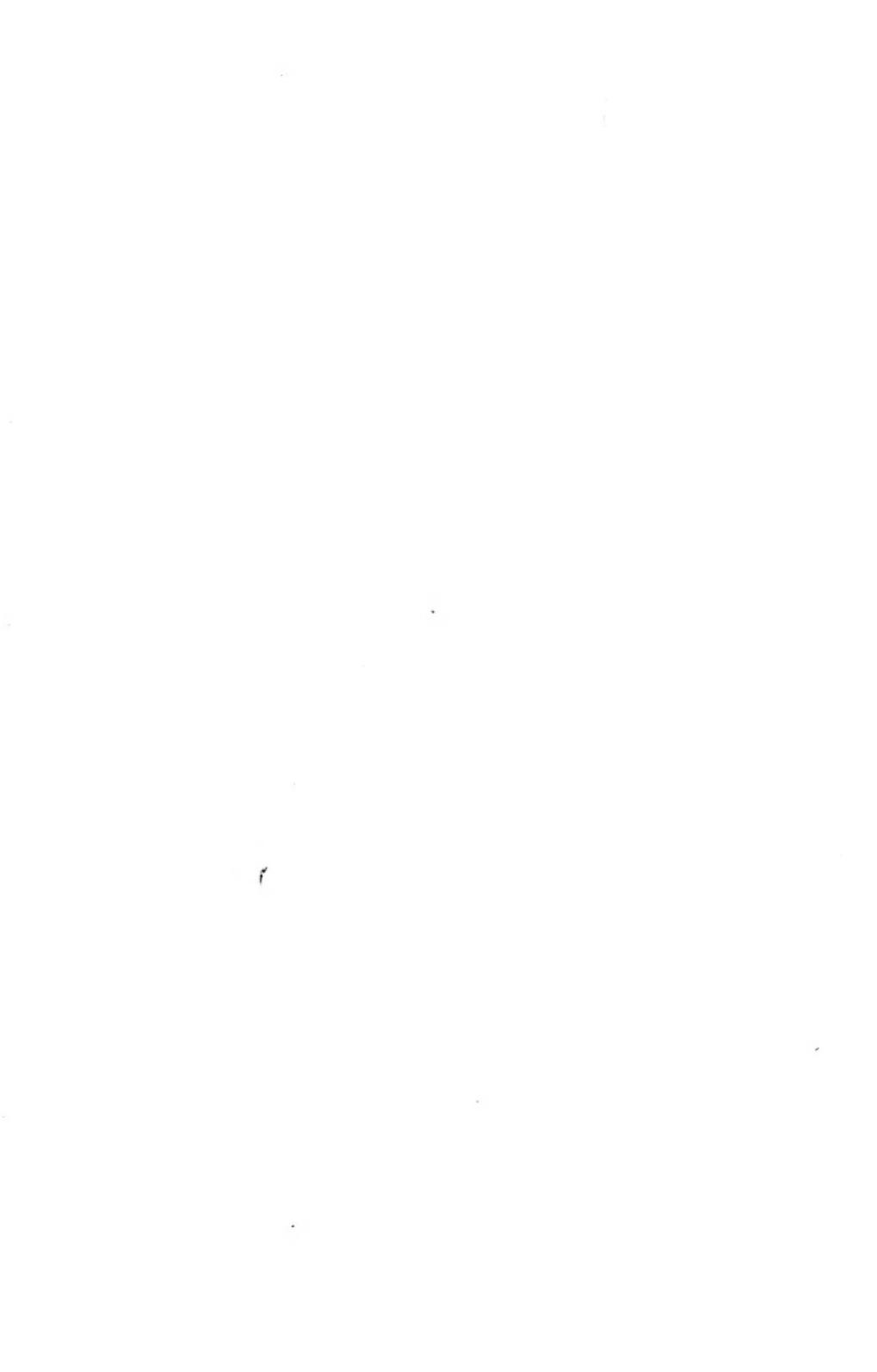
OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD



Mrs Edw^d. Kennard



JOHN A. SEAVERNS



OUR FRIENDS IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

OUR FRIENDS
IN
THE HUNTING FIELD.

BY

MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

Author of

“THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT,” “KILLED IN
THE OPEN,” “A CRACK COUNTY,”
“LANDING A PRIZE,” ETC., ETC.

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OUR FRIENDS
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I.—THE MELANCHOLY MAN.

WE all know the melancholy man of our hunt. Where is the hunt who has not one at least? Nine times out of ten he belongs to the wizened aristocratic type, and is unmistakably a gentleman, in spite of his pinched and woe-begone appearance, which, save for nice clothes, is worthy of a tramp on the road.

His features are good, but lean and fleshless; the nose well-shaped and inclined to be

aquiline; but the complexion is of that dull, lustreless, purple hue which at first sight raises a suspicion of an unhealthy partiality for spirituous liquor, but which in reality comes from a torpid liver, a bad digestion and a defective circulation.

Is it necessary to state that he is a confirmed pessimist, who looks at everything with jaundiced eyes and from the darkest point of view? He cannot be cheerful if he would. Biliary headaches, chills and stomachic derangements render him a constant martyr. The unfortunate man can never forget that he has a body, and he is unable to rise superior to its depressing influences. His physical vitality is low and communicates dolefully with the brain.

You seldom meet him without his declaring in solemn, lugubrious tones, that England is going downhill as fast as she can, that her trade is a thing of the past, that she is rotten to the core, that the aristocracy are on their

last legs, and that when the Queen dies we shall have a revolution and become a prey to anarchy, socialism and dynamitards. In his opinion, the army and navy are laughing-stocks for the rest of the world, as inefficient as they are grossly mismanaged, and if we had a big European war we should probably knuckle under without striking a blow. He refers with malicious glee to our reverses in South Africa, and looks upon the Irish question as a striking instance of England's effeteness.

As for fox-hunting, he loses no opportunity of stating that it has gone to the dogs altogether. Hounds, men, foxes, scent, have all deteriorated, and the good old days—if they really were good—have departed for ever. We no longer possess any horses worthy the name of hunter—they are either thoroughbred screws or the progeny of cart horses. We have allowed the foreigner to buy up our most valuable stock; and then, in our short

sightedness and crass stupidity, prided ourselves on the achievement. The love of sport is dying out. A spirit of disaffection is springing up. By the time our sons and daughters attain their majority, hunting will only be a memory of the past, and foxes will have disappeared from the face of the earth. After that, the deluge.

These are a few of the melancholy man's favourite topics of conversation, and he becomes gloomily eloquent when expatiating on them.

The weather is a continual source of annoyance and irritation to him. Needless to say, it is never just right, and he abuses the Englishman's proverbial privilege of grumbling at it.

If it rains, he is very miserable. It is a sight to inspire compassion in the heart of one possessing a robuster organization, to witness the touching resignation with which he bends his lean body forwards and meekly

bows his well-hatted head to the gale. Smiling faintly at his nearest neighbour, he says with unutterable woe :

“ This is what we call pleasure ! ”

When the icy winds sweep over the broad Midland pastures, chilling horse and man alike, he shivers and shudders, growls like a bear with a sore head, and tries to restore warmth to his perished frame by beating it violently with his frozen hand, the fingers of which are dead, the nails a bluey white. Every tooth chatters, and he can scarcely articulate.

Poor man! with his sluggish blood and bad circulation, he feels the cold acutely. It seems to shrivel him up and drives him down to depths of wretchedness even blacker than those in which his spirit habitually resides. On such days he greets his familiars, as one by one they appear at the meet, with a dejected nod of the head and a “ What fools we are to hunt ! ”

Just think that every time we go out on a morning like this and try to imagine we are enjoying ourselves, it costs us precisely a ten pound note."

"Oh! come, come, my dear fellow, it don't do to look at things in that way," says some strong, stalwart young man in reply, eager for a flourish over the fences. "We shouldn't care for any of our sports if we began to reckon up the costs."

"I can't help it," groans back the melancholy man, as a blast of cold air comes whistling over the uplands and cuts through him like a knife. "I'd give a fiver this minute to be at home."

"Lord bless us!" responds the other cheerily. "Don't talk like that. Why, what on earth would you do with yourself if you didn't hunt? You'd die of *ennui*."

"Ah! that's where it is. You've hit the right nail on the head. After I've read my newspaper of a morning, I don't know how

the dickens to kill time. I think I'll go abroad."

"Not you. You'd be bored to death. Depend upon it, there's nothing like fox-hunting."

"One gets into a groove and can't get out of it," sighs the melancholy man; "but it's no use trying to persuade me that there is any enjoyment in this sort of thing. Phew!" as the wind catches his hat and it is only saved from rolling to the ground by the guard-string.

As our friend is so keenly sensitive to the inclemency of the elements, it might naturally be supposed that on a fine day, when the sun is shining overhead in a blue, clear sky, his mental condition would rise like a barometer. But such is by no means the case. The melancholy man is melancholy always. It is only a question of degree with him.

Imagine a bright frosty morning that acts on most people as a tonic. He starts from

home, vowing that there cannot by any chance be a scent, which opinion he freely communicates to his friends with funereal solemnity. Should his predictions turn out incorrect, as is sometimes the case, he shifts his ground with considerable ability and in his low, sepulchral voice inquires if you have ever noticed how remarkably badly horses fence, and how sharp and black the shadows appear when the sun shines brightly.

“Take my advice, my dear fellow,” he urges, “don’t jump more than you can possibly help. The best of hunters can’t see the size or depth of a ditch on such a day as this. Do you remember poor Tom Buckley? No? Well, three years ago Tom Buckley broke his leg through his horse blundering at a bottom and rolling head over heels. It was not the animal’s fault. The sun was shining, just as it is shining now, and he could not see one bit what he was going at. Tom Buckley never was the same man after that fall. It

played the bear with him. He got rheumatism and sciatica, and it ended by his having to give up hunting altogether. Poor devil! He does nothing now but dangle about the clubs, run after old ladies who go in for parties, and play whist."

At this juncture his listener executes a hasty retreat. He feels that if he hears many more of the melancholy man's tales he shall not have an atom of nerve left. As it is, what between the frost, and Tom Buckley's miserable fate, a cold shiver begins to creep up his spine. At last hounds are moving on and he gladly rides after them. He cannot exactly define the reason, but his friend's conversation nearly always produces a depressing effect—a sort of the-world-has-come-to-an-end kind of feeling.

Meantime, the real business of the day commences, and the despondency of the melancholy man increases. If hounds find and run well, his spirits grow lower and

lower. He experiences none of that exhilaration which the chase is supposed to produce. On the contrary, he sees nothing but disasters and difficulties ahead. Every fence appears a man-trap, at which he confidently expects to meet with his death. For, needless to say, he does not ride hard, or love jumping for jumping's sake. His nerves and health are both too shattered to enable him to derive any real satisfaction from risking his neck over a country. He does not care for life. Not a day passes that he does not inveigh against it, yet, strangely enough, he is singularly loath to leave it.

Combined with certain unconquerable fears, he possesses a mad desire to be with the hounds. His great ambition is to be thought a forward man. He heartily disdains the roadsters, and takes every opportunity of abusing them. But in spite of his gallantry — which deserves all the more credit from being forced, and not natural—a line of gaps

and gates does not always succeed in bringing him to the desired goal. Every now and again a stiff, unbreakable piece of timber, or a cold, glancing brook bars the way. Then come indecision, mental conflict, defeat. That stout ash rail is sure to break his bones, the water will give him his death of cold. No, he dare not take the risk. He tells himself that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak ; and so the chase sweeps on. Some get over, filling him with envy and a species of grudging admiration ; others retrace their footsteps. Not infrequently he is left alone ; alone, with no companion save black thought and dark, dark despair. He looks again at the obstacles, but alas ! they do not diminish in size. Finally he turns tail and seeks a road, despising himself as hemingles with the mighty throng swarming on the macadam.

“ What a garden ass I am to hunt,” he mutters disconsolately, for the run has been productive of nothing but mortification to

him. Yet straightway arises the embarrassing question :

“What the deuce should I do if I didn’t?”

There lies the root of the whole difficulty, and a very serious one it is. The fact is that, apart from his liver, his digestion and his bodily ailments, the melancholy man has little to occupy his mind. He is not intellectual or self-contained, and his resources are nil. He has no work, no profession, nothing to fill up his time. His only aim in life is to try and amuse himself, and in that he signally fails. The commonest navvy, labouring by the roadside at breaking stones, is better off than he. At least, the hours do not hang heavy on *his* hands, and he can eat and drink without fear of the consequences, or speculating as to what patent medicine he shall invest in next. Our friend the melancholy man hunts, shoots, races, fishes and swears, but from none of these things—not even the latter—does he derive more than very temporary satisfaction.

When bantered by his acquaintance as to his habitual state of despondency, he asserts that it is constitutional ; but would it be so if he were obliged to work for his living, if too much ease and comfort had not spoilt him in early life, and taught him to spend his entire existence wondering how he can kill time ? As if Old Time would not rise up and defy so puny an opponent. No doubt his bodily infirmities are a sore trouble, and we sympathize heartily with him on this account, but has he not yielded too much to them and to the curse of idleness ? Is he not just a little hypochondriacal ?

He does nobody any harm. He is his own worst enemy, and more to be pitied than either laughed at or censured. But it would prove a good thing for the melancholy man if his house were to be burnt over his head, if he lost all his money, and found himself forced to gain a living by the sweat of his brow, instead of going hunting six days a

week and grumbling the seventh. He would find his zest for pleasure increase if he no longer possessed the means of gratifying it, and time hang less heavy on his hands when he had some occupation. Too much ease, too much luxury, too much self-indulgence, these things produce melancholy, and are responsible for half the bad livers and the bad digestions in the kingdom.



II.—THE POPULAR WOMAN.

THE popular woman is generally a fortunate one. In fact, she owes her popularity in great measure to her good fortune, for she has certain conditions in her favour, without which she might vainly have aspired to the title that distinguishes her.

Looks by themselves are not sufficient to insure a solid social success. To begin with, they do not stand the test of time, and opinions are apt to vary so much on the subject. In proof of this statement, are there not numbers of young and pretty married women in the hunting field who ride obediently behind their husbands, stuck to them as if by glue, and who almost entirely escape observation? They never by any chance

have a masculine friend, and their discretion is quite remarkable. Even that sour-tongued Mrs. Grundy fails to detect a flaw in their conduct. They are beautiful but dull, highly estimable but unresponsive to a degree, in short just what good nice women should be. Nobody talks much either to or about them. And the reason? Oh! the reason is simple enough, and the dear creatures are not, perhaps, quite so good as they seem.

Their husbands are nearly always either too loving and attentive or too severe and jealous. Their ideas of marital duty are horribly strict—at least on the female side: they have a separate set for their own guidance—and so the poor wives, who doubtless all possess an embryo germ of popularity, have no chance of developing it. They are meek dummies, who accept their lot and who allow their individuality to be merged in that of the lordly personage they have chosen to espouse. Some of them are

willing slaves, others grumble, but dare not rebel. Now the popular woman is not hampered in any way. She enjoys liberty of speech, liberty of action, liberty even of conduct. She can do and say pretty much what she likes without being called to account. Is she single? you ask. No, certainly not.

She has a husband, but he is an amiable nonentity, or if not wholly a nonentity, she knows so well how to manage him that he seldom interferes. He yields to superior merit, and plays quite a secondary and subordinate part in the establishment. He hardly ever knows who's coming to dinner, or the names and number of his guests. His wife grasps the reins of power in a firm grip, and does not relax her hold for a minute : she is a sharp woman, and knows that if she loosed the matrimonial cords, ever so slightly, her popularity would soon become imperilled.

Her husband is a very rich man, and owns one of the most beautiful places in the county. He is generously constituted, and allows her to spend what she likes. His own tastes are extremely simple and child-like, and very little contents him.

Both he and his better-half are excessively hospitable, and keep regular open house. He is the last person in the world to find fault, yet sometimes he cannot help wishing for a quiet hour to himself. The neighbouring town is furnished with a cavalry barracks, and the officers are always dropping in to every species of meal. Sometimes they spend a long and happy day, beginning at about eleven in the morning, and lasting until twelve at night. But Monsieur is much too wise to make any objection. It is Madame's affair. If it pleases her to have a lot of young fellows perpetually hanging about the place, well and good.

In truth she lavishes her invitations broad-

cast, and especially amongst the engaging males of her acquaintance. She feeds them with game, venison, truffles, *foie-gras*, cream ice, hot-house fruit, and all the delicacies of the season, and they go away highly satisfied, declaring in their own expressive language that they have been awfully “well done.” And to be “well-done” is the first secret of gaining that refined, delicate, fine-fibred thing, a man’s heart.

“Poor old Charlie’s” (as they call their host) wine also meets with unqualified approval. His sherry is “ripping.” His tawny port “A 1.” They testify their appreciation by the number of bottles which they cause to disappear at every visit, and by the frequent recurrence of those visits. Master Charlie’s best Cuban cigars, a box of which is always open, also meet with commendation. His guests help themselves freely and puff away with great enjoyment at the fragrant weed, sitting meanwhile in careless

attitudes on the sofa by Mrs. Charlie's side. These gallant soldiers treat their hostess with tender familiarity, and they play like children with her gloves, her fan, or her lace pocket-handkerchief, every now and then, quite by accident, letting their great clumsy fingers come in contact with her pretty jewelled ones. On such occasions she takes no notice, for Mrs. Charlie is not strict, neither is she a prude. The nineteenth century has set its face against prudes, and she goes with the times. As for tobacco, she vows she has not the faintest objection to it (though she never allows her husband to smoke in her presence when they are alone), and declares that nothing pleases her more than to see her guests making themselves at home. They take her at her word. Who could doubt the veracity of so charming and sensible a person? She delights in a good story, and is not irremediably shocked by a naughty one. She reproves, but forgives the teller in a way which

makes the naughtiness appear almost virtuous, and restores the self-confidence of the narrator.

In return for the many substantial benefits received and the material advantages gained, the artless youths who are entertained so sumptuously by the popular woman, are disinterested enough to dangle about her saddle out hunting, to pay her compliments, varying in sincerity, and to indulge whenever they meet, in that light meaningless banter which is known in the English language by the name of "chaff." They carry their devotion to such an extent that young and pretty girls, quite ten or fifteen years junior to Mrs. Charles are left almost entirely neglected. But then they have no good dinners to give, no comfortable house to offer as a club, and are not the possessors of a large income. Masculine admiration is composed of a good many mixed ingredients. It is not all "I love and adore nothing but your own sweet

self." To do the popular woman justice however, in spite of a tolerably pronounced partiality for young men, she knows how to render herself extremely pleasant and agreeable to all classes. She makes it a rule never to turn up her nose at anybody, and when in the hunting field goes out of her way to say a few cheery words to each of the numerous ladies of her acquaintance. She knows that they all possess tongues, and considers it better policy to conciliate them than offend, for she is quite aware that these dear female friends of hers tell little spiteful stories against her behind her back, although to her face they are all civility and amiability.

Mrs. Charlie is not a person to quarrel with lightly, for every winter she gives a ball, and besides that, is constantly getting up theatricals, concerts, bazaars, &c. Every one likes to be asked to her parties. They give the young ladies a chance of meeting young men, and the dowagers an opportunity of

tattling and gossiping. True, when the festivities are over there are some ungrateful enough to call them *omnium gatherums*, but what does that matter? It does not prevent the very same people from seeking invitations on the following year.

Mrs. Charlie knows all that goes on in the county. One or two of her greatest friends and staunchest adherents are always ready to repeat every ill-natured remark, but she has the good sense to take little heed, and when she meets the offender makes no alteration whatever in her conduct. For the popular woman is very good-natured, even although it be with that light, superficial good-nature which proceeds mainly from a cold temperament, a robust constitution, and a profound content with self.

She is proud of her popularity, and would make a good many sacrifices to retain it, and her husband is proud of it also, perhaps even more so than she. It never enters his

honest head to imagine that the swarms of friends who invade their household resemble flies buzzing round a treacle-pot. When the treacle is all gone, very few of them will remain.

The worthy fellow entertains a profound admiration for his successful wife. He believes in her, and trusts her implicitly, and nothing pleases him more than to see what a universal favourite she is.

The farmers to one man adore Mrs. Charlie. She talks to them in her fluted, silvery tones,—those tones which have just a touch of patronage and exaggerated sweetness about them, and inquires with well-simulated interest after their affairs, the prospects of agriculture, the price of grazing-stock, and the birth and parentage of the young 'un they bestride. Their good-humoured bluffness and unconcealed admiration please her. It makes her sigh now and again over the little vein of insincerity that runs through

her own character, but she likes the honest fellows none the less on that account, and at every race-meeting plies them with champagne and pigeon-pie, until they drink her health in a salvo of applause.

The popular woman rides well to hounds, and looks remarkably neat on horseback. Her hunters render it difficult to keep the tenth commandment, so perfect in make and shape are they; and the rider does them justice. She has the best fitting habit in the whole hunt, and the number and elegant patterns of her waistcoats drive other sports-women to despair. Such spots, such stripes, such delightful checks and combinations, where on earth do they come from? Mrs. Charlie has no concealments on the subject. She is open and kind to a degree. She tells everybody who her tailor is, where he lives, how much he charges, and invariably winds up by declaring that as regards her own personal expenditure, no one could be more

economical than herself. "My dear, I never spend more than twenty pounds a year on my hunting clothes." But lo and behold ! on application to the tailor, he respectfully informs his customers that Mrs. Charlie has a bad memory, and labours under some strange mistake as regards price, whilst the piece of horse-cloth from which her last waistcoat was made, was specially woven, and cannot be procured for love or money, since the loom has accidentally been destroyed. So the would-be imitators retire discomfited, only to gaze with renewed envy at Mrs. Charlie's hunting-attire, which even her greatest detractor cannot help admitting is perfect. She seems to possess some secret unattainable by others of her sex. Their hair comes down ; hers never does. Their elastics break ; her skirt always keeps in its place. Their faces get flushed and red ; she invariably retains the same cool pink and white complexion, with which she sallies

forth of a morning. And then what a waist she has for a woman of her age. Straight and well as the popular woman rides, she misses many a good run through her inveterate love of “coffee-housing.” When jogging from covert to covert, instead of keeping up with hounds, she generally sinks back to the very tail of the procession, accompanied by one or two chosen individuals. Here she becomes so interested in lively badinage of a flirtatious nature, or else in listening to the latest gossip of the hunting-field, that she frequently misses her start, and prefers riding about the roads with the reigning favourite rather than going in for a stern chase. She seldom experiences much difficulty in finding a companion, for she is a lively and entertaining personage, with manners highly agreeable, if a trifle artificial, and the light tone of her conversation is finely suited to the majority of idle young fellows who like to be amused, and who neither care for nor

appreciate high intellectual attainments in a woman. Mrs. Charlie prefers the anecdotal-biographical style, and her smart remarks in this particular branch generally call forth great applause, and are greeted by bursts of laughter.

Her male friends talk of her familiarly as "an awfully good sort." Few of them can conceive of higher praise than contained in these words.

So the popular woman proceeds on her triumphant way, starting fresh admirers, and making new acquaintances every season, yet having the social tact to keep up with her old ones whenever it is possible. Her life is a light, easy, happy one, surrounded by every comfort and all that money can give.

But if we look closely into the cause of her popularity does it not appear that great part of it is due to no less a person than poor old Charlie—that pleasant, easy-going individual

who adores his wife, who lets her do exactly as she likes, and who furnishes the sinews of war without a murmur?

Would or could Mrs. Charlie have attained to the position she occupies of "popular woman of the hunt" had she been mated to a surly individual, mean and close-fisted, who refused to let her ask a soul to the house without his express permission, and who threw every conceivable obstacle in the way of her social advancement? Popularity cannot be achieved without a certain amount of liberty. Women know this, and men know it too, though they won't admit it, and profess to despise the Charlies of this world. Wives are so much better, crushed and kept in good order. At any rate, without her husband's passive support Mrs. Charlie would have encountered many difficulties. He gave her house, money, position, and all the conditions necessary to insure success, and whilst she climbed the ladder, he remained

content to play second fiddle to "the popular woman."

There are men, and men. Let us give him his due.



III.—THE MAN WHO BLOWS HIS OWN TRUMPET.

Most of us are acquainted with the man who blows his own trumpet. Taking a comprehensive glance round the hunting field, there is generally no difficulty whatever in selecting one or two fairly representative specimens, who thoroughly understand the somewhat egotistical art of glorifying themselves at the expense of their neighbours. As a matter of fact they are not scarce, and exist in considerable numbers.

Their music, however, varies. Some men blow their own particular trumpet in such a subtle, refined and artistic manner that it scarcely offends the ear, whilst others play the favourite instrument so loudly and

clumsily that the distracted listener flies, overcome with disgust.

Taken as a rule, the great bulk of musicians are not much liked by their comrades. Nine times out of ten the deeds of valour which they proclaim so stentoriously, are chiefly imaginary, and are known by the field to possess a fabulous origin.

If hounds have had an extra good run, it is a foregone conclusion that, according to the man who blows his own trumpet, nobody has seen anything of it except himself and, perhaps, the huntsman. In his bumptious, loud-voiced way, he narrates how he jumped some place, hitherto considered as unjumpable, and so secured a start whilst all the hard riders of the hunt were coasting up and down. Being never caught again he led every yard of the way. By Jove ; yes, every yard !

And in that week's *Field* and sporting papers there will probably appear a highly-

coloured account of Mr. X.'s exploits. Nobody knows how they became chronicled, or why he alone, out of all the field, should have his doings published and lauded up to the skies. Mr. X. himself, when bantered on the subject, professes entire ignorance, but is willing to discuss it with great good humour. He has an amiable weakness for seeing his name in print, but vows that the writer of the account in question is a perfect stranger to him.

Nevertheless the observant, and possibly the envious, remark that whenever a representative of the Press puts in an appearance at covert side, the man who blows his own trumpet treats him with great civility and distinction, brings forth his instrument and plays some out-of-the-way fine flourishes upon it. A stranger is naturally impressed, and, not knowing the gentleman's idiosyncracies, accepts his statements in good faith. Several of Mr. X.'s personal experiences are so

remarkable—at least, when told by himself—that if he did not repeatedly vouch for their truth, you would have considerable difficulty in believing them to be veracious. For instance, there is the story of how Mr. X. swam a river a quarter of a mile broad, and reached the opposite side, firmly seated on his saddle, just in time to dismember the fox in the absence of the huntsman and the entire field. Also the tale of how he cleared a canal, tow-path and all, which lurked unsuspected on the far side of a hedge, and which jump, when measured very carefully next day, proved to be no less than thirty-six feet and a half. And then there is the gallant incident of his jumping two railway gates in succession on his way to covert, rather than wait for the train to pass, and so arrive late at the meet.

Unfortunately for Mr. X., he is unable to produce any eye-witnesses in support of his assertions. They have all either died, gone

abroad, or disappeared. As a rule, they die. But there is no fear of the younger generation forgetting our friend's feats of valour. They hear about them much too often. If only the man who blows his own trumpet could be persuaded not to talk so incessantly and exclusively about himself, people would be much more ready to give him credit for his performances, which if not brilliant, are fair. As a rule, he is too greatly taken up with his own doings to have a good eye for a country, and therefore is quite incapable of cutting out the work over a stiff line of fences. But he will jump where other people jump, and is generally there, or thereabouts. The pity is that by some strange hallucination of the brain, pleasing to himself, but not to others, he invariably imagines in every run that he has had the best of it, and frequently irritates his friends by exclaiming in a patronizing tone :

“ Hulloa ! my dear fellow, where were you

in that gallop? I missed you altogether. Never saw you once."

Not unfrequently he meets with a richly-deserved rejoinder, but the trumpet-blower has no sense of shame, and reproof rolls off him like water from a duck's back. His self-complacency wraps him round in an impenetrable garment, and there is something almost sublime in his unassailable serenity. Laugh at him as you please, he is a most happily constituted individual, and always on good terms with "number one."

Mr. X. rarely jumps the smallest fence without cantering up to some of his acquaintance, and saying :

"God bless my soul, sir! did you see what an extraordinary bound my horse made over that place? Gad! but he must have cleared close upon thirty feet."

"I am very sorry," comes the contemptuous, sneering, or indifferent rejoinder, according to the mood of the speaker; "but

really I have not a pair of eyes at the back of my head, and even if I were so fortunately constituted, I doubt whether I could succeed in keeping them perpetually fixed upon you."

"Ah!" returns our friend X. with compassionate good humour, for, to give him his due, it takes a great deal to put him out of temper, and thanks to his peculiar organization, sarcasm is nearly always lost upon him. "Poor chap; I forgot how short-sighted you are. What a misfortune it must be, to be sure. You miss so much."

"One's deuced glad to miss some things."

"Ha, ha; just so, just so. But about my new horse, I tell you he's a ripper."

"Very likely. I never knew you possess one that you did not say the same of."

"Ah! but this animal is something quite out of the way. He is such an astonishingly big jumper."

His comrade casts a critical glance at the

gallant creature, who is said to have cleared nearly thirty feet, when certainly six would have sufficed. Such lion-hearted hunters are not to be met with every day, as he very well knows, and they inspire respect.

“Where did you pick him up, X.?” he inquires with some show of interest, for rare is the sportsman not willing to plunge into a discussion about a horse, even on slight provocation.

“I bought him from Northbridge. You know Northbridge, don’t you? A little fellow with a yellow face and black moustache.”

“Yes; a deuced hard man to hounds.”

“Do you really think so? He has shocking bad hands, and could no more ride this horse than a child. He was always in difficulties, so one day, when I saw that he was particularly unhappy and ill at ease, I went up to him and made him a very handsome offer for his mount, which he accepted

on the spot. That's the way to do business. The horse was quite thrown away upon Northbridge, but he's worth his weight in gold to a man with good hands."

"Meaning yourself, I suppose, eh?"

"Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. See how quietly he goes with me. I can do exactly what I like with him."

"Ah!" says his companion ironically. "But then we're not all such accomplished horsemen."

But if our worthy friend draws the longbow out hunting, when actually surrounded by all the dangers of oxers, bullfinches and stake-bound fences, he waxes a thousand times more eloquent when the excitements of the day are safely over and he reclines in a comfortable armchair by his own fireside. His imagination then leaps over every obstacle, and scoffs at the narrow boundaries imposed by truth. There is no need

now to bridle either his tongue or his fancy, and when let loose one flows on as vivaciously as the other.

He makes his poor young wife's flesh positively creep with the stirring recital of the heroic deeds he has performed, and the extraordinarily narrow escapes he has had from breaking his neck or his back, maiming himself permanently, or disfiguring his good looks, which he esteems very highly, whilst pretending a superb and manly indifference for them.

They have not been married very long, and the foolish creature believes in him still as next door to a Deity. Every morning as he goes forth to the chase, in all the brave array of scarlet coat and snowy breeches, her timid heart beats fast with pangs of horrible apprehension, as she looks tearfully up into his great, healthy, rosy face.

“Oh, Tommy, darling,” she exclaims imploringly, “do be careful, if not for your

own sake for mine. Remember that you are a married man now."

" You little goose! Am I likely to forget it?"

" Perhaps not. I hope not; but really, Tommy, dear, it always seems to me that you are so very, *very* rash. Surely it cannot be necessary for you to go out of your way to jump these tremendously big places, especially when nobody else, from your account, dreams of running the same risk."

He laughs in a lordly, patronizing manner—for her upbraidings are sweet incense to his vanity—kisses her fair cheek, and says reproachfully :

" Dearest, you are too fond—too anxious. You would not have your Tommy a coward, would you, or show the white feather when hounds run? No, no, that is not his nature."

She casts an admiring glance up at him through her tears.

" My own," she says in a voice choked with

emotion, “ all I ask is, that you should not be quite—*quite* so horribly brave. Every time you go out hunting I am miserable until I get you safely back again.”

He gives her another hug—this style of conversation, especially when carried on before the butler and footman is extremely agreeable—then rides gallantly away, and returns at evening primed with a series of adventures even more astounding than those he has hitherto recounted.

The hounds found. There was a ghastly piece of timber, at least six feet high. Certain death stared you in the face if your horse failed to clear it. Death ! Aha ! what was that to him—to any brave and resolute man ? Others might shirk it if they liked, but he would sooner meet with his end than despise himself as a “ funk-stick.” No, never should it be said of *him* that he had turned away from any mortal thing. The fellows were all hanging round and hesitating. Gad ! the

sight made his blood boil. It was more than he could stand. He crammed his hat down on his head, took his feet out of the stirrups, and——

“And — oh! what, Tommy? You do frighten me so,” gasps the poor little woman.

“And by an extraordinary miracle got over. Only man who did. Not another one would follow.”

“I should think not, indeed,” says his wife with a sob of relief and terror.

“The young fellows now-a-days are a poor lot,” he continues disparagingly. “They haven’t half the spirit of we married men.”

“Perhaps that’s because your wives render you desperate.” And with these words she falls upon his neck and kisses him, and vows that never, never was there such a daring, foolhardy, but altogether delightful personage as her Tommy. Only it will not do for him to go on in this reckless and quixotic fashion.

His life is far too precious, ever so much too precious.

If he has no regard for it himself, and risks it needlessly every day, at least he might remember how dear it is to other people—that they would be simply miserable if anything were to happen to him, &c., &c. As for courage, it is downright wicked to carry personal bravery to such an extent. Why! A Gordon is a joke to him, and so on, and on.

Tommy sits in his armchair, stretches out the long manly limbs that he so wilfully endangers, and listens with the utmost complacence to all this innocent tirade. It is an hour of unmitigated enjoyment to him, and he cannot refrain from throwing in a few picturesque additions every now and then, which still further increase Mrs. Tommy's fears for his safety, and exalt him almost to a demi-god in her estimation.

In his wife's presence he has no hesitation

in blowing the trumpet with loud clarion notes, to which every fibre of her sensitive being responds.

And uncommonly pleasant he finds the process, with a pretty, adoring little woman as listener, who never detects a false chord and goes into raptures over even his most fantastic flourishes. It is a great temptation to perform loudly and frequently, and he makes no effort to resist the insidious pleasure.

She is his ; why should he not impose upon her love and her credulity ? The one is as sweet to him as the other, for they flatter his self-esteem in about equal degrees.

But take care, Tommy. You are playing with edged tools. The time may come when this trusting and simple creature will no longer believe so implicitly in your gallant deeds, when suspicions may begin to arise in her mind, until at last you stand revealed as a braggart and a boaster.

Then, instead of the soft caresses and tender solicitude to which you have been accustomed, you may be met with nothing but scornful indifference and passive contempt.

For the misfortune of all those who indulge the dangerous practice of blowing their own trumpet too offensively is, that after a very short time they are sure to be found out, and by none sooner than those who are nearest and dearest.

Women who have been once deceived in the object of their adoration are pitiless judges. Men are much more lenient, and often will derive amusement from the idiosyncrasies of a friend.

But a wife never forgives her lord and master for bragging and boasting, once she discovers that he is an adept at these accomplishments. She rushes from one extreme to another, and instead of regarding the unfortunate trumpeter as a prodigy of valour, very

quickly gets to looks upon him as a hypocrite, a humbug and an impostor.

Woe be to that man if hereafter he attempt to play the very feeblest and most mournful notes upon his cherished instrument. As the years pass, it runs a terrible chance of getting rusty from disuse, and even when he does snatch some rare opportunity of practising upon it, his tunes no longer sound as they did. The chirpiness has gone from them never to return.



IV.—THE DANGEROUS WOMAN.

SOME ten or fifteen years ago, the dangerous woman was not nearly so frequently met with in the hunting field as she is at present. She has multiplied in an alarming degree. Formerly, ladies who rode to hounds and who went as hard as men were the exception rather than the rule, and their staid female relations of a past generation looked upon them as utterly unsexed and wholly condemnable.

Now all this is changed. A great revolution has taken place in public opinion, and the growing popularity of the chase is rendered conspicuous by nothing so much as by the increased number of fair Dianas who join in our world-famed national amuse-

ment. Prejudice apart, there is no real reason why they shouldn't. The exercise is a healthy and a pleasant one. Nice, quiet women, country born and bred, possessing a natural love of sport, and a fair knowledge of it in all its various branches, are a distinct ornament and addition to the hunting field. They resemble flowers on a dinner-table, adding to, rather than detracting from the solid delights of the dinner itself.

Most of them have ridden since they were children, and know how to put a horse at a fence, quite as well, if not better than their husbands and brothers. Their hands are lighter, their sympathy more subtle, and unless they have the bad luck to "get down"—a misfortune which must happen to every one at times—they are never in anybody's way, and can thoroughly hold their own, even when hounds run hard over a stiffly inclosed country.

But the ladies of whom we are now speak-

ing are the practised *equestriennes*, who, alas, to this day, form but a small contingent, and we are forced to admit that by far the greater portion of Amazons who grace the hunting field with their fair presence, can only be characterized as dangerous, both to themselves and their neighbours. They are the best-natured creatures in the world, brimming over with fun, good-humour and vitality. They mean no harm, not they ; but for all that they are to be shunned and avoided.

Their courage and their ignorance is something surprising.

It is impossible to help giving a grudging admiration to the one, whilst loudly deplored the other. Without exaggeration they seem to know no fear, and to possess no nerves whatever. With loose seat, dangling reins and up-raised hand they will drive their horse in any fashion, either trotting or galloping, sideways or standing (it makes no difference to them) at the most formidable obstacle.

And, wonderful to relate, nine times out of ten they bundle over somehow ; not gracefully or prettily, but still they get to the other side.

It really seems as if women, in spite of their physical inferiority and fragile exteriors, often possess more of that quality called "pluck" than the lords of creation. This may give rise to contrary opinions, but the conclusion has been arrived at in the following manner. Take a field, say, of some three or four hundred members. Perhaps three hundred and seventy of these may be men, the remaining thirty, ladies.

You will probably be able to count the real hard riders among the former on the fingers of your two hands, whilst out of the thirty ladies, certainly half-a-dozen, if not more, will do their very best to keep with hounds, and this, too, in spite of the inferior animals they are often mounted upon. What becomes of the courage of three hundred and

sixty odd gentlemen who constitute the remainder of the field? Taking their lesser numbers into consideration, the fair sex certainly show a more gallant front than the men. True, in most instances, the man, from his superior strength and physique, will certainly outdo the woman, but from a more comprehensive view, the ladies appear to possess a greater share of nerve.

In what other way is it possible to account for the presence out hunting of so many dangerous females? Their inexperience, their utter want of knowledge, their truly execrable horsemanship, have not the slightest deterring influence. Valour soars above such humble considerations, and scoffs at minor difficulties. Oh! for a little discretion, but that quality is conspicuous only by its absence.

A popular actress runs down from town for the day, accompanied by some enamoured and wealthy youth, who mounts her on his most perfect performer.

“Can she hunt?” “Oh! dear, yes. Why not?” “Has she ever been out before?” No, but she has ridden up and down the Row scores of times, is not a bit afraid, and sees no reason why she should not jump fences just as well as her neighbours.

Her youthful adorer tells her to fear nothing, to give her horse his head and follow him. She nods back in reply, clenches her white teeth, and obeys literally. At the first fence, though it is but a gap, she flies clean out of the saddle, and is only re-seated, after a few agonizing seconds, by the shock occasioned from landing right on the quarters of her gallant leader.

Does she mind? Is she intimidated? Not she.

On the contrary, she gives a little triumphant laugh at finding she has not tumbled off altogether, as she certainly was very, *very* nearly doing, and bumps and rolls away over the trying ridge and furrow, forcibly remind-

ing one of an ornamental jelly, that quivers and shakes preparatory to a most tremendous downfall. Her blood is aglow, and she is getting warmed to the saddle, so that at the next fence she does better, and is only pitched on to the horse's neck. By seizing hold of his mane, however, just in the nick of time, she manages to scramble back before any very serious mischief is done. Just think what courage it requires to jump, when every moment you fully expect to be jumped off. Why, it amounts to positive heroism.

For place or people our dangerous woman has no respect, and has not the faintest notion of waiting for her turn. She is much too ignorant of the etiquette of the hunting field.

Seeing a small cluster of horsemen gathering round a fence, she at once imagines they are shirking, and with a loud "Look out, I'm coming!" charges right into their midst,

mayhap knocking one or two down, but that is a matter of no consequence.

Then she flounders wildly over the obstacle, cannons against the unfortunate gentleman in front, and all but capsizes him and herself too.

He looks round wrathfully, with ugly masculine oaths springing to his lips, and sees a pretty, saucy, flushed face smiling benignantly at him from under a battered pot hat and a halo of fuzzy flaxen hair considerably disordered. He recognizes Miss Tottie Tootlekin of the "Gaiety," famed for the symmetry of her legs, and the elegance of her dancing, and stifles his displeasure. Who can feel angry with so adorable a creature, even although she does not appear to greatest advantage when bundling over a fence? No! The dear thing has given him too much pleasure many a time ere now. Her divine breakdowns still linger in his memory. So after ascertaining that his horse has not been

injured, he reserves the ugly words for another occasion—one is sure to arise before long—and smiles back at Miss Tottie in return. Now, if the dangerous woman were dangerous only at her fences, it might be possible by a little diplomacy to avoid her, but alas! such is not the case. As long as she is within twenty yards of you, you are never safe, and cannot foresee the vagaries which she may perform.

You very soon learn that it is wiser to yield her precedence at every obstacle, rather than expose yourself to the almost absolute certainty of being jumped upon. But it is horribly annoying, when you are galloping after the hounds to secure a start, to find your horse crossed and recrossed at almost every stride, until at last you hardly know how to get out of your tormentor's way.

Neither is it pleasant to be jostled against a gateway, and have your leg squeezed till you could scream with the pain, and you do

not like having the gate itself slammed in your face, whilst Madame or Mademoiselle hustles through, regardless of *everything* and *everybody*, and makes not the smallest effort to keep it open.

Apparently it is beyond your power to escape altogether from the dangerous woman, for even whilst trotting quietly along the sides of the roads, she comes cantering up from behind and careless of the fact that you are altogether within your rights, and that there is no room for her to pass, she will remorselessly drive your most cherished hunter on to the various stone heaps, or else right into the ditch. As for an apology, she rarely condescends to make one, although she may have been the means of bringing you into direst trouble.

Another of the dangerous woman's little idiosyncracies is, that she possesses as supreme a disregard for canine as for human life. She jumps quite as readily upon a hound as upon

a man, and thinks nothing at all of breaking the ribs of the best animal in the pack by riding over him. *That* is a very minor catastrophe.

“Hurt, is he? Oh! I’m awfully sorry, but it can’t signify very much. There are plenty besides him, and he should not have got in my way.”

Hounds are simply so many speckled dogs to her, that have no particular value, and one appears exactly like the other. The proprietor’s legitimate anger, something of which reaches her ears, seems utterly absurd and unreasonable. With a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, she exclaims:

“Dear me! What a fuss, to be sure, and all about nothing. Just as if it mattered!”

When the huntsman is making a cast, and requires elbow room, she dashes ruthlessly in amongst the pack, and scatters them like a hail-storm.

Fortunately, there are a few external signs by

which the dangerous woman may generally be distinguished. To begin with, her attire is nearly always wanting in that quiet, unostentatious neatness which characterizes the thorough sportswoman. She usually wears a blue, green, or peculiar coloured habit which does not fit, and is evidently made by a second or third rate tailor. The skirt bags round the waist, and the body is adorned with showy brass buttons. Not infrequently she appears in earrings or brooch, and makes liberal display of a gold watch chain and a bunch of charms. Her tie is either a dummy, or else so execrably tied that it works round under her ear. It is almost a certainty that her hair will come down during some period of the day, and her hat is always crooked, or else battered in. If hounds run well, her face grows very red. She is flushed and excited by the unwonted exercise. Her reins are loose, her seat unsteady, and her hunting crop affords much inconvenience, especially the

lash, which is perpetually getting entangled in something or other. The dangerous woman rarely, if ever, sits square on her horse, with the left shoulder brought well forward, and elbows into her side. She goes flopping, and jogging, and jolting along, in a manner which, though painful to the beholder, must be infinitely more so to the unfortunate steed who is doomed to carry her.

Men as a body regard her with detestation, and never lose an opportunity of expressing their aversion.

Every defect is sneered at and magnified. Not one but has some story to tell against her, or who owes the dangerous woman a grudge.

They resent her presence in the hunting field, and not without cause. Her ignorance incenses, and her rashness irritates, until she cheats herself out of the admiration ever due to courage.

The fact is, if the men must be knocked

down like ninepins, they would much prefer the process being performed by one of their own sex. At least they could then have the gratification of expressing their sentiments in forcible language, and allow wounded feeling to find a natural outlet.

It is a hard case to be forced to bottle it up, because a wild and dangerous female chooses to bowl you over and to treat you without any ceremony whatever.



V.—THE SPORTING HORSE DEALER.

THE sporting horse dealer constitutes a feature of almost every hunting field. He comes out with the intention of selling his horses, and keeping that end steadily in view, manages very successfully to combine business with pleasure. When pursuing the fox, he honestly feels that he is enjoying himself, and yet not neglecting his profession.

Not infrequently he is a gentleman by birth, specious and plausible, whose apparent candour puts you off your guard and overcomes your better judgment. It is as well to fight shy of him. Your dealings with him are seldom, if ever, quite satisfactory, and you have no redress. He holds you hard and

fast to your bargain, and refuses to take back an unsuitable animal, except at a ruinous price. In short, the gentleman dealer will nearly always contrive to get the better of you in some way or other, whilst, if a quarrel arises, he invariably manages to have the law on his side. We dismiss him, since it is not of him we would speak, but of the regular, old-fashioned sporting dealer, who gains a more or less precarious livelihood from his profession, and who, five times out of six, is a real good fellow.

If he recommends you an animal which he has ridden to hounds himself, his recommendation can generally be depended upon. He knows exactly what a hunter ought to be, and in what requirements he fails. He has a decided advantage there, for he judges from personal experience, whereas non-sporting dealers are either forced to buy from looks alone or else from hearsay; never a very reliable method. You need not blame them

for deceiving you, for are not they themselves continually being deceived ?

There is no greater mistake than for people to imagine, as they so constantly do, that their pet dealer is infallible. Alas ! poor man, he is frequently taken in, and moreover, perpetually subjected to very severe losses and disappointments. Folk in a hunting county will not buy without a trial with hounds. They send back the horses lame, coughing, or so seriously injured as to greatly detract from their value. The dealer has to bear the risk of seeing his property depreciated for the sake of the chance of getting rid of it altogether. Then, again, he sells what he believes to be a sound, honest animal at a good profit. The nag drops down dead, whilst being conveyed in the train to his future destination, and a post-mortem examination reveals that he has been suffering from abscess on the brain, a clot of blood, aneurism, or a hundred other unsuspected causes. Here, again, the dealer has to

put up with the loss. Frost too has to be taken into calculation. If the earth is ice-bound no one will buy, and there is very little money to be made when some twenty or thirty horses are standing week after week in the stable, eating their heads off. As a rule, dealers are not nearly so black as they are painted. There may be a certain proportion of rogues amongst their ranks, just as there are in every other walk of life, but at the same time, honest, respectable ones exist, whose chief anxiety is to suit their customers and study their interests. Buyers are often unreasonable and almost impossible to please.

If they buy a horse, and he does not happen to turn out well, they at once abuse the dealer, and declare they have been done. Temper, want of condition, sprains, splints that develop themselves subsequent to the day of purchase, in fact, every ailment—and they are many—to which the noble animal is heir are all laid at the same door; and how-

ever straightforward a dealer may be, he seldom gets the credit of being so. People are so horribly and ridiculously suspicious, that they prefer to believe the worst, rather than the best of one another, and they fail to see how often they defeat their own ends by jumping without sufficient grounds at the conclusion that their neighbour is deliberately trying to cheat them. Why! in nine cases out of ten it is to their neighbour's *interest* to treat them well, rather than badly, and self-interest, as we all know, is the great motive power which rules the world.

We maintain that, whatever the sporting horse dealer's faults may be—and as, like the rest of us, he is only mortal, the presumption is he has some—he is a truly gallant fellow, and the harder he rides the more you may trust him.

He lives quietly, eats and drinks sparingly, retires to rest at ten o'clock every night of his life, rises with the lark, writes all his

business letters, attends to his accounts, and superintends his stable arrangements before he goes a-hunting, and has nerves of iron, wrists of steel. He sallies forth on some gay four or five-year-old. The animal has probably only been in his stables a couple of days, and he knows absolutely nothing about it. He is a tall, muscular young fellow, with a keen, hawk-like eye, and long legs that curl themselves well round a horse and make him yield to their compelling pressure. It takes a great deal to unseat him, as the young ones soon find out. Our friend trots out to covert at a steady pace, eschewing company. He feels his animal's mouth and otherwise makes acquaintance with him. If he is a brute, it does not take him long to discover the fact, and he calculates the highest price obtainable, and where to place him. To keep a bad horse never pays, yet on the other hand the good ones sell themselves. No subtle per-

suasion or half truths are required in their case.

Once arrived at the meet the manners of the young one are quickly ascertained. If they are nice our sporting dealer allows him to mix freely with the crowd, riding him with long reins, and making him bend well to the bridle hand. His friends and customers exchange salutations.

“Hulloa, H.! ” they exclaim. “What sort of a horse is that you’re on? Is he a clipper?”

H. smiles gently — there is something singularly childlike about his expression when he smiles—and says :

“Don’t know yet, sir; but I’ll be able to give you a more satisfactory answer after to-day. At least,” he adds *sotto voce*, “I hope so.”

After a while the hounds find, and H., who is averse from revealing his stable secrets to the whole field before he knows them him-

self, starts off, taking care to ride a little wide of the pack, but nevertheless keeping them well within view. Before long, a fence comes across his path, and fortunately it is just such a one as he would wish to meet with, being a thin bullfinch, with a shallow ditch on the take-off side, over which a good horse can jump, and a bad one scramble without much risk of a fall.

He gives the “young ‘un” a touch of the spur, and the willing animal cocks his small spirited ears, and bounds over like an india-rubber ball. That will do. H. has already confidence in his steed, and sends him striding along the green pastures with a vengeance ; for hounds by this time have settled to the line, and are running at racing pace over the sound old turf.

A couple more fences, cleared lightly and well, prove that his mount knows his business, and is worth at least a hundred and fifty if not two hundred guineas. H. now has no

hesitation in joining the bulk of the field. He is prepared to show them how the “young ‘un” can perform, and not hide his light under a bushel by riding a solitary line.

At the first check he casts a rapid glance around and takes in all the bearings of the situation. A stiff piece of timber, over four feet in height, divides him from the calmly expectant crowd, who being on the right side, and in the same field with the hounds, look with pleasurable curiosity at the rash horseman on the wrong.

This, however, is our friend H’s opportunity ; one which he contrives to make most days when he has the satisfaction of finding himself on a decently good hunter. Personally he knows no fear, being a man of dauntless courage, so he sets the young horse at the stout ash rails, with the determination of one who will not be denied, and who, by hook or by crook, intends to get to the other side. The good beast, feeling this, clears

them brilliantly, and with a foot to spare. A murmur of approval runs through the crowd as H. quietly pulls him back into a walk, and looks to the right and to the left, with a bland air which seems to say, "Gentlemen, that's nothing, nothing at all. Wait until you see us take something really worth calling a jump."

This little episode is not without result. Presently, as hounds are still feathering uncertainly about the ridges and furrows, one of H.'s oldest customers approaches, and takes a prolonged survey of his animal.

"Niceish horse that you're on to-day," he says laconically.

"Yes, sir, very," H. replies. "Sort of horse would carry you like a bird. See what loins he has, and what a back. That's the stamp gentlemen want to get over a country with, and be carried in safety."

"Very likely, but I'm not requiring a hunter just now. I'm full."

"Indeed sir! More's the pity ; for this is the nicest young horse I've been on for a long time. They are not to be bought every day. Perhaps you would oblige me by throwing your leg over him, not with a view to purchasing, but merely to see if your opinion is the same as mine. He gives you a wonderful feel over his fences, and is as quiet and temperate as a seasoned hunter."

After some little further persuasion, the customer does as desired, and descending from his own horse, mounts the young one, whose attention being concentrated on the hounds, stands quite submissively during the operation. His present rider merely intends to canter him round the field, feeling that against his better judgment he has weakly yielded to H.'s solicitations, but hounds suddenly take up the scent and fling forward at a great rate. Before he can change back they are stealing ahead, and he is bound to

stick to his mount, unless he would lose sight of them altogether.

A brilliant twenty minutes follow over the very cream of the country. Fences are big, and towards the end of it men begin to tumble about like ninepins. A wide bottom is productive of much "grief," but the "young 'un" faces it like a lion, and carries him in grand style.

After all, what does it matter if his stables *are* full? He begins making a variety of plans as to how he can turn old Rattletrap into the cow-shed, and run him up a temporary box until the spring, when he will be turned out to grass; how he will find a good home for Glorvina, whose fore legs are daily getting more and more shaky; and how if the worst comes to the worst, he might part with Slinker, who can never quite be depended upon at either water or timber. In short, those twenty minutes produce a most curious revolution in his state of mind, for

whereas he began by being certain that he didn't want another horse, he ends by feeling convinced that he cannot possibly do without one, and should be absolutely culpable if he did not avail himself of the present opportunity. "Buy when you can, not when you *must*," his inward monitor advises.

Meanwhile H. has had an unusually pleasant and comfortable ride on his customer's confidential hunter, and has kept close behind that gentleman all the way, so as to pick him up in case of accidents. None occur, fortunately, and each fence well cleared adds an extra five-pound note to his property. When at length hounds run into their fox, and he is asked to put a price upon the young horse, he looks shrewdly at his customer's flushed and beaming face, and replies without any symptoms of hesitation :

"I can't take a penny less than two hundred and twenty guineas for him, sir, even from you. I should ask most people

two fifty, but I should like to suit you if I can."

The customer has been too much delighted by the horse's performances to make any demur or haggle over the sum demanded, and before H. leaves the hunting field, the good young animal on whom he sallied forth in the morning has passed out of his possession. Sometimes he wishes he could keep them a little longer, but he has no cause to regret the transaction, having cleared over a hundred net profit.

This, however, is one of his lucky days, and it is quite on the cards that a great portion of this hundred will dwindle away in paying for the unlucky ones, on which occasions he derives neither pleasure nor remuneration. But that's the way of the profession. If good horses did not pay for the bad, trade would come to a standstill altogether, and leave a very sorry balance at the banker's at the end of the year. It makes a thorough hunter

come dear, but what's to be done? Dealers must live.

Apart from this, our friend H. is entitled to the very highest praise for the truly gallant fashion in which he risks his neck on behalf of his customers. It is he who ascertains for them what an animal is worth, and many and many a nasty, unpleasant ride must he have during the process. He has to put up with kickers, rearers, rank refusers, curs, brutes of all kinds, to accommodate himself to hard mouths and light mouths, rough paces and smooth, fast and slow, rogues and roarers, in short every species of animal, good, bad and indifferent.

The great majority of men who go out hunting are filled with self-pride, and think an immense deal of themselves if they cross a country successfully on tried performers whom they know intimately. H. manages to keep with hounds on the very worst of nags, and by his patience, courage and fine

horsemanship frequently succeeds in converting them into hunters.

Do not let us, then, grudge him his profits—they are not as large as they seem—and if any man deserves them, he does. He has to subsist like the rest of us, but he will not “do” you intentionally, and if the sporting horse dealer were to disappear from our hunting fields he would leave a decided gap, and prove a very serious loss to most people who follow hounds. We want him, and cannot get on without him, whilst his gallantry and courage call forth our highest admiration. Long may he continue to hunt and give us the pleasure of witnessing his gallery jumps.

The humorous dealer is another type frequently met with.

He is an older and a heavier man, who rides great, fine weight-carriers, and generally occupies a forward place when hounds run. By the bright, sparkling and persuasive wit

of his tongue he secures many a customer, who begins by laughing at his jokes, and ends by buying his horses. He is full of anecdote, gossip and story, and has the ready tact and happy knack of suiting his conversation to his listener. To the elderly gentleman he talks politics, and reveals any deficiency in the animal he desires to sell with a peculiarly magnanimous frankness that produces an excellent effect. For the younger generation he has always some *bon mot* ready, or some choice, very choice tale adapted to their intellects and taste. With ladies he is simple, sentimental, cordial, poetical and loftily philosophical by turns. He is a clever fellow, who makes a profound study of human nature, and knows the foibles both of men and women by heart. His powers of observation stand him in good stead, and teach the wisdom and necessity of humouring customers. Perhaps he laughs at them behind their back, but he manages to dissemble his real

opinions on most ordinary occasions. Nevertheless, he has strong instinctive likes and dislikes, which could not be otherwise with his quick brains and ready tongue. He hates a dullard or a fool, and holds him in supreme contempt. He cannot always succeed in concealing his feelings, though he flatters himself that he does.

Provided a man treats him well, he will treat him well in return, but if he attempt to display any reprehensible “cuteness,” or behaves in an ungentlemanly fashion, then he feels no compunction in paying him back in his own coin. If for interest’s sake he does not sell him a downright bad horse, he will mercilessly castigate him with his tongue, and humble him to the very dust by a storm of shrewd, unanswerable remarks full of worldly wisdom and native wit. Few men can beat him in argument or repartee. He wields those formidable weapons with a dexterity conferred by long practice and

much natural ability, and moreover delights in the effect they produce. Nothing pleases him more than to squash an enemy who has incurred his righteous wrath, but it requires a good deal of provocation to draw him into one of these contests, and it is only when his probity is doubted, his word disbelieved, or his feelings wounded that he shows his claws. What would the British lion be worth if he were always chained up in an iron cage, and could not fight on occasion ? Is a man to be insulted with impunity, simply because he is a horse dealer? No, certainly not. He is made of flesh and blood, that quivers and throbs under a smarting word, just like everyone else.

Our humorous friend is a man of considerable culture, who takes an interest in all the leading topics of the day. Moreover, he has a taste for reading, and gets through a good many works of miscellaneous fiction. A sen-

timental novel, ending up with love and matrimony, pleases him immensely, for beneath his somewhat rough exterior beats a warm and kindly heart, easily touched by romance. Altogether he is original and a character ; differing from ordinary, commonplace humanity, who sometimes fail to understand him. In consequence, he now and then makes enemies, who dub him forward, vulgar, pert ; but his friends far outnumber his foes, and they laud "Old G." up to the skies, and talk of him as a first-rate "chap." They laugh immoderately at his witticisms and caustic observations, and wherever he happens to be, a little circle of admirers invariably surround him, eager to hear the last good story, and to repeat it to their comrades. "Old G." is one of the best-known men in the hunting field, and on a dull day when scent is poor and things slack all round, he seldom fails to enliven the proceedings. All the same he never loses sight

of the main chance, and whilst laughing, jesting and talking, effects many a “deal.” He keeps a good class of horse, and as a rule treats his customers liberally and well. Rub him the right side instead of the wrong, and there is no better fellow in the world than “Old G.” His tongue will only amuse, and neither offend nor insult, if you possess sufficient insight to discern that he is not one of the baker’s dozen, turned out so freely by Nature’s mould, but possesses a distinct individuality of his own.

Then we have the stout and affable dealer, of the rosy cheeks, blue eyes and benignant smile, who looks rippling over with the milk of human kindness. His manners are quite charming; so soft, suave and persuasive, and there is a sort of innocent frankness about him, which it needs the utmost moral courage to resist. He carries you away insensibly. Those unctuous utterances of his possess an irresistible fascination,

and cast a glamour over your clearer judgment.

He comes out hunting on a compact jumping cob, as sensible as a man, and in a sober way thoroughly enjoys the chase, though he does not profess to ride hard. He has a quick eye for a horse, and always has a useful lot in his stables, and is so courteous and fair spoken that he can persuade a customer into buying almost anything he chooses. Not until the customer is removed from the magic of his presence does he remember that he really has not had much of a trial, and that the fences jumped were absurdly small.

Other dealers there are many. It would take us too long to describe the different types, but taken as a body, all hunting people owe them a debt of thanks, and should hold out the hand of friendship to the men who find them good horses with which to enjoy their favourite pursuit.

VI.—THE MAN WHO GOES FIRST.

THE hunting field is a mimic world, on whose stage an immense number of different passions are represented. Pleasure, pain, envy, fear, malice, mortification, excitement and enthusiasm all play their part; sometimes one, sometimes the other preponderating, according to the nature and temperament of the individual. No deception is possible.

Every man, whatever his pretensions may be, soon finds his proper level, and is estimated strictly according to his merits. The coward is known as a coward, the impostor as an impostor. They cannot take in their friends and neighbours by any semblance of courage, or by any amount of bragging. Their foibles are pitilessly clear to the sharp

eyes by which they are surrounded, and he who fancies himself a hero in the field is often spoken of with contumely and contempt. One thing is certain—folk are always more ready to pick holes than to praise. Human nature finds it much easier to censure than to laud.

But fond as people undoubtedly are of placing each other's weaknesses under a strong magnifying glass, and mercilessly dissecting them, there is one man who escapes the process, and for whose gallantry and manly courage they have nothing but unqualified admiration.

I speak of the man who goes first. The man who, whenever hounds run for ten minutes at a time, is sure to be seen close at their sterns, performing prodigies of valour and charging fences, oxers and bullfinches with a brave indifference that makes us feel he is somehow fashioned of stouter stuff than ourselves.

His comrades entertain a profound veneration for him. Some few of the younger generation try vainly to emulate his deeds. What quality do these youngsters lack, that so small a proportion can compete with him? Do they lose their heads? Do they want his experience, his coolness and nerve? Who knows? Anyhow, no one who sees him in the hunting field can refrain from acknowledging that he is a dauntless and lion-hearted fellow, who, unlike the majority of the human race, does not appear to know the common sensation of physical fear. Do youth and a sound constitution confer this advantage? Not always; for sometimes he has left his best years behind him, and is the father of a large and annually increasing family.

When hounds run hard, nothing can stop him. With them he must and will be."

He has an eye like a hawk—bright, quick, keen, and no sooner does he land into a field than he immediately determines upon his

point of exit, and rides straight for it, not deviating a hair's breadth to the right or to the left. This power of promptly making up his mind is invaluable, and makes slow horses appear fast, bad gallopers good. If he fails to perceive a gap, or weak place in the fence ahead, he goes the shortest way, and simply chances it, taking his risk of what may be on the other side. Crash! fly the timbers from a rotten oxer. Splash! rise the green waters of an unsuspected pond, into which his horse has jumped. What cares he?

With a flounder, a scramble, and a "Come, get up," he is once more careering over the springy pastures, urging his good steed to his speed, in order to make up for lost ground.

Fence after fence he throws behind him, reckless of consequences, never looking back unless it be when he has succeeded in clearing an extra wide ditch, to call out some warning word to his followers, bidding them

put on the pace. Many of them are good men and hard, but they cannot touch their leader, who in every instance points out the way and is not to be headed.

It is a brave sight, when they reach some almost unjumpable place, to see the man who goes first, whilst others are hesitating and drawing rein, crash right into the very midst of it, regardless of danger, and a sorry one when, as is frequently the case, he and his horse roll head over heels in horrible confusion of arms, heels and legs. But even then he is undefeated. He rises from mother earth with a pale, smiling countenance and a muddy coat, and is up and away before anyone has had the heart to follow his example.

“Not hurt, old fellow?” shout out the little band after his receding form, as they proceed to take advantage of the handy gap made.

His head is swimming, his eyes blinded by black specks, his neck so stiff he cannot turn

it, but he calls back, “No; not a bit. Only a trifle shaken.” So saying he crushes his battered hat well down over his mud-stained brow, and without more ado proceeds to charge some equally formidable obstacle.

The wonder is that he has a single whole bone left in his body, and yet strange to say, although he gets a very fair proportion of falls, he seldom meets with a bad one. The timorous old roadster crawling along the roads breaks his leg owing to his horse putting his foot into a drain. The habitual shirker smashes three ribs at a gap, where all he asks of his steed is to walk quietly through it. The man who goes first has escaped these and similar disasters. His courage protects him, and it really seems as if he possessed the power of communicating his own gallant spirit to the animals he bestrides. Anyhow, the dash and determination of the rider appear shared by his hunters. It is the rarest thing in the world to see one of them

refuse with him. They probably know that they must go whether they like it or not, and so wisely make up their equine minds to the inevitable.

Our friend sells annually, and therefore commences the season with an entirely new lot. But that fact makes not the slightest difference to him. He very quickly ascertains what his summer purchases are worth, drafts those that are bad, and proceeds to put heart and “jumping powder” into the good. Early in May he sends his whole stud to the hammer, asserting that he is not rich enough to retain favourites. As a rule his horses are nothing particular to look at. They are mostly well bred, but lean as greyhounds, and bear sundry marks and blemishes. Nevertheless they fetch fabulous prices, and his sale is always one of the great events of the London season. People have seen his hunters going in the field, and are willing to open their purse-strings wider than their

wont, in order to secure such extraordinary performers.

Need we say that they are frequently disappointed in the purchases made, and discover, when too late, that it is the man, and not the horse, who is extraordinary? They cannot buy his iron nerve, or his unconquerable spirit. If they could, no price would be too great to pay for them. They are divine gifts conferred but rarely, and often thrown away upon the possessor who has it in his power to be a leader of men, not merely of the hunting field.

A large proportion of the gentlemen and ladies who pursue the fox are very much given to drawing the long bow, and to enlarging on their own performances directly the dangers of the day are well over. Seated before a blazing fire, or with their legs comfortably stowed away under the mahogany, it is an exceedingly gratifying thing to say, "I did this and that. Did you see me?"

But the man who goes first is as remarkable for his modesty as for his courage. He never talks of what he has done, perhaps because he knows that there is no occasion for him to glorify his deeds by self-encomium. They are patent to all the world, and require not the laudation of Number One. To listen to him, you would think that every soul out hunting had seen the run better than himself. He never enters into a discussion as to where so-and-so was at a given period of the day's amusement, and if asked who broke down the big bit of timber which let in all the field, or who showed the way first, over that awkward, treacherous-banked brook, invariably says he can't remember, though he knows quite well it was himself.

No one is so keen a sportsman, nor so good a fellow as the man who goes first. Although no doubt he is not exempt from those emulative feelings shared by most hard-riding men, he will always stop to pick up a

fallen friend, and even lose his place of honour in order to catch and bring back that friend's riderless horse.

He does not speak much out hunting, being too intent on the proceedings of the hounds to indulge freely in the pastime, known as "coffee-housing." Nevertheless the ladies all unite in worshipping him, and are his most devoted admirers. They think more of a word from him than of an hour's conversation with an ordinary individual. For where is the woman, young or old, who does not prostrate herself before the shrine of courage and who does not entertain a profound reverence for its possessor? So great is the enthusiasm excited by our friend in the female breast, that every now and again, some rash and infatuated young person will take it into her head to constitute him pilot. Woe be to that young person. Half a dozen fences soon prove the temerity of her resolution. In hunting parlance she is quickly

“choked off,” and gives up the attempt to follow so desperate a leader with a sigh, realizing the danger to which she exposes herself in endeavouring to do as he does. But he heeds not the fair sex. Sport is his bride and his passion. Next to hunting he places salmon-fishing, and after salmon fishing shooting. The chase of the “thief of the world” comes, however, a long way first in his estimation.

He is the Master’s right-hand man, being indefatigable in getting up poultry, wire funds, &c. The huntsman treats him with peculiar respect, and nearly always accepts his opinion as to which way the hunted fox has gone. Indeed, few people get so near a view of Master Reynard.

A large number of the field repose such unlimited confidence in the man who goes first that they cannot even conceive of his being thrown out or taking a wrong turn. They follow his movements with sheepish

obsequiousness, and are perfectly content to hunt *him*, without either hounds, fox, or huntsman. He has been known to lead a numerous contingent for three or four miles over a stiff line of country, just for the joke of the thing, knowing all the time that the pack had run to ground in an entirely opposite direction. When he pulled up and his astonished followers suddenly exclaimed, “Where are the hounds?” with a quiet smile of appreciation for their sportsman-like propensities he answered demurely :

“The hounds ! Oh ! they’re at Grange-cross, trying to bolt their fox from a drain. I thought you knew.”

“Then, what the dickens did you mean by leading us this dance ?”

“Dance, gentlemen ! May I not be permitted to qualify my young horse for our county steeplechases ?”

But even such a manœuvre as this cannot succeed in freeing him altogether from his

train of blind admirers. They consider it more honour and glory to be in the same field with him than with the hounds. He is their fox, their sport, their everything. Such adulation is flattering, but it has its drawbacks. The truth is, the man who goes first is regarded as the hero of his particular Hunt, whether he like it or not. He cannot escape from the celebrity earned by his gallant and fearless conduct. Are we foolish to hold him in such esteem? to look up to a person because he jumps more and bigger fences than we do ourselves? The answer is, No.

Our friend may not be intellectual, he may be slow of wit, dull of conversation, feeble at repartee, but for all that he is fashioned of the stuff of which heroes are made. He would lead his men on some desperate charge were he a soldier, just as coolly as he rides at a double oxer; or if a sailor, die fighting at his guns as calmly and bravely as he bores

the way through some apparently impenetrable bullfinch.

So long as our hunting fields continue to produce such men as these, no one can say that the sons of England have become effete. The gallant spirit is still there which has enabled them to win so much fame in the past, and will yet win them fame in the future.

For the man who goes first out hunting is no mere weakling, but a fine, determined fellow, full of manly qualities and vigorous vitality which any national emergency would call into life. One thing is certain. Wherever he may be, he will always gain the applause of his fellow men and exercise a powerful influence over them.

VII.—THE VENERABLE DANDY.

DEAR old fellow! How often have we not smiled at, and laughed over his little foibles and vanities, and loved him at heart, much in the same way as we love Thackeray's immortal Major Pendennis. His artifices are so innocent, the small deceptions that he practises so thoroughly guileless and transparent that they fail to irritate as artifice and deceit generally do.

Seen from an appropriate distance, he may indeed recall Keats' celebrated line—"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," but on nearer inspection, his exquisitely glossy, black wig, worn low on each side of the ears, proclaims itself unmistakably to be an artificial covering; whilst the carefully curled whiskers and

moustache of which he is so proud, recall to our minds sundry advertisements that daily greet our eyes in the newspapers anent “Nuda Veritas,” “Mexican Renewer,” and so forth.

Granted that art and not Nature has produced the captivating results centred in the person of our venerable Dandy, shall we admire him any the less on that account? No, certainly not.

Few people can deny that his jetty wig is a beautiful thing in its way, fashioned most cunningly and artistically. Those two little touches of rouge on either cheek-bone have a pleasing effect, although they are perfectly patent to the beholder. Black and red go well together, and the contrast between our old buck’s complexion and his hair reminds us of some pretty, fresh country lass.

Nor can it be gainsaid that the two dazzling rows of false teeth which gleam so brilliantly from beneath his stiff, military

moustache, are decidedly pleasanter to look at than one or two irregular yellow stumps, taking precarious hold, like mouldy tombstones in a deserted churchyard. Yes, when we look at our venerable friend, we can forgive all his little simple contrivances to appear young and boyish ; for, at least they impose upon nobody but himself, and if they render his child-like spirit happy, so much the better. The weaknesses in which he indulges are mostly harmless. They neither hurt nor offend his neighbours, and the presumption is that they arise from an inordinate desire to please and to secure golden opinions.

Poor old Dandy ! By all means keep up thy illusions, so long as they afford thee any satisfaction. Many of us in our hearts can even feel a certain sympathy for them, since the process of getting bald, and wrinkled, and aged, and seeing others pass us in life's race, is not agreeable to the majority. Few

people like leaving their youth and good looks behind them, or seeing the pitiless years stamping themselves upon brow, and face, and form.

All women hate it, and most men, and so they try to remain juvenile as long as they can, and take first to one cosmetic, then to another, in the vain hope of putting off the evil day, or at least preventing their friends and neighbours from guessing that it has already arrived. And they flatter themselves they succeed, only they don't. Human beings are seldom lenient to each other's age, and have a pitilessly correct way of scoring up dates. Births, deaths and marriages serve as excellent pegs for the memory.

When the venerable Dandy first rises of a morning, he has a bad quarter of an hour. What horrible tales does not the glass tell ; what ghastly seams and furrows it reveals ! From brow to chin he sees nothing but a mass of wrinkles that deepen day by day.

But the mysteries of the toilet once gone through, and no man—not even the old gentleman's valet—is acquainted with their subtle entirety, he descends upon the world at large, a different creature, and airs himself in the sunshine like a bird of gay, if borrowed, plumage.

How erect he sits in his saddle, after the difficulty of getting there is once overcome, and he rides happily off to the meet, conscious that he is well-dressed and looking his best. He struggles gallantly with his seventy summers, and fights Old Age inch by inch, retiring with a brave front, although worsted periodically in the combat. He draws in the small of his back, and inflates his padded chest as he passes a couple of pretty young ladies, seated in a smart pony-trap, drawn by a quick-stepping, hog-maned pony. They obtain a fine view of his lovely teeth, accompanied by an irresistible smile, as, bowing at the shrine of youth and beauty,

he takes off his hat with an elaborate flourish. What a sheen there is on that same hat! All the “Mashers” of the hunt are dying to find out who his hatter is, and where he dwells. Such secrets as these, however, our venerable friend never reveals. Time after time have they invited him to dinner and primed him with old port—his favourite beverage—but although he grows very chatty under its influence, he continually diverts the conversation when it reaches too personal or inquisitive a point. He keeps his own counsel and makes no confidences on such important matters.

The whole county covet his receipt for boot varnish. It is both their envy and their admiration. But although numerous attempts have been made to induce him to part with the information, not a single endeavour has ever succeeded. Rumour says that he himself concocts the precious fluid and will not even allow his valet to witness the operation, for

fear of being betrayed. However that may be, no one else's boots are so well turned out as his, or possess so smooth a polish or such delicately rose-tinted tops. Added to this, the flexibility, softness and spotless purity of his leathers drive all the gentlemen's gentlemen to despair. Labour as they will, they cannot produce the same results. Their lemon juice, their various acids, their pipeclay and breeches powder are just so much waste of money.

Whether they like it or not, the younger generation are forced to admit that the venerable Dandy is the best-dressed man in the whole hunting-field. His ties are irreproachable, his pins miracles of neatness and sporting art, his coats fit without a crease, his waistcoats are quite unique, and as for his buttonholes they are simply perfection. But as he is beautiful, so he is prudent. Our dear and respected friend never sallies forth to the chase without a large white mackin-

tosh carefully rolled up and strapped to his saddle:

There are some things about him which fairly pass the comprehension of his fellow sportsmen. For instance, not a soul out hunting can conceive how, when every one else is splashed with mud from top to toe, he manages to appear at the very end of the day with scarcely a stain! If they have occasion to gallop down a road at full speed, receiving many a shower-bath in the process, there he is cool, neat and smiling.

Other people's horses bespatter them with dirt, he never seems to receive a clod. Their eyes get bunged up with the gritty compound thrown from the heels of the animal in front, his apparently never do. In fine weather his appearance completely defies change. Hat, gloves, breeches, boots, wig, whiskers and complexion are all as carefully preserved when hounds go home to their kennels as when they met. How he manages

it is a problem which has puzzled even the very wisest heads of the Hunt, and one which they are totally unable to solve.

Needless to say, the venerable Dandy never jumps. A fence might interfere sadly with his "make up," and the risk of discovery is too great. Fancy his feelings, if his lovely wig were to be caught in the thorny embrace of some ugly bullfinch, and left behind. Ugh! the very thought sends a cold shudder down his spine. If such a thing as that were to happen really, then the sooner death came the better. He could never survive his shame. But our friend wisely avoids the chance of this or any similar catastrophe. He puts discretion before valour, and contents himself with a line of gates, or if they happen to fail, he sticks perseveringly to the roads.

Here he finds plenty of company, people, in fact, of excellent pretensions, booted and spurred, and clad in pink. But sometimes these gentlemen are in too much of a hurry

for him. They have no objection to tearing along the hard macadam, being valiant enough when those horrid dangerous fences are removed from vision. Dandy, however, has long ago discovered that a quiet and sedate trot suits his stays and his teeth better than a more violent pace. Galloping shakes him and disarrays his person. Consequently, he not unfrequently finds himself in the society of the second horsemen, who pilot him cunningly about. His manners are very condescending and affable. He knows how to converse with those occupying a lower grade, at the same time maintaining his dignity. No one ever takes liberties with him, for whatever his faults may be, he is a thorough gentleman. Even his foibles are those of his class.

His great delight is to get hold of some nervous young lady—especially if she is nice looking—who protests she hates the very sight of a fence. How prettily and tenderly

he soothes her fears, with what a manly courage tries to point out that they are unfounded, and how kindly he insists on her taking a sip from his flask, amorously applying his own lips after those of the fair. The dear old fellow is never so happy as when buzzing about the ladies and overwhelming them with delicate attentions. He has a courtly grace, an old-fashioned, chivalrous manner towards the sex, which they appreciate, and which they deplore as being out of date now-a-days. He hovers round a pretty woman, much as a blue-bottle hovers round a jam pot, and gets on quite confidential terms before some envious but rough-mannered youth has even received a nod. The young fellows affect to despise him and some of them treat him with scant courtesy, but nevertheless they are a little bit jealous of his social successes, and wonder “ How the devil the women can put up with that old fool.” Perhaps, after all, the latter are the

best judges of those subtle qualities that go to make up a gentleman, and the majority show a decided partiality for the venerable Dandy.

If he only says “a fine morning,” or “a cold one,” they will always smile back at him in return, and make some playful remark agreeable to the old fellow’s vanity.

Thoroughly happy is he on a bright, sunshiny day. Then, like a butterfly, he spreads his wings, and the spirit within him soars on high. Fine overhead, dry underfoot, he asks for nothing more, and flits about, showering his little polite speeches on all those with whom he comes in contact. It does not take much to content him. He is an easily satisfied, guileless creature, who still retains a large capacity of enjoyment, which advancing years cannot suppress altogether.

The spiteful say of him that he never by any chance has an original idea. Well! how many people are there who have, except in

the deceptive recesses of their own imagination? What they mistake for originality is generally only repetition. An idea is almost as scarce as a nugget of gold, but luckily most people get on fairly well without possessing any very large stock on which to draw.

Dandy passes muster with the crowd, and is a pleasant-spoken, harmless, good-natured old beau, who desires nothing better in this world than to live and let live. His philosophy may not be profound, but it is of a very useful, work-a-day description.

What if the men do laugh at him now and again, and he is unpleasantly conscious of the fact. He has the consolation of knowing that their wives and sisters always take his part, and stick up for him in his absence. They realize that in spite of sundry little conceits and affectations, he possesses a simple, kindly nature, whose very craving for admiration is childlike and innocent.

They may see, but forgive his faults, and even while they smile at, love the venerable Dandy, who is so ready to pay them compliments, and as far as lies in his power to render himself agreeable.

Such is the brilliant side of the picture. Alas! that there should be another.

Why will the winds blow, and the rain descend to stamp as fraudulent an amiable old gentleman's harmless attempts to improve upon Nature? Nature is not always kind, and often requires assistance, which, however, she not unfrequently resists.

If the morning be very wet, Dandy consults his barometer, and does not attempt to face the elements. He cannot enjoy fox hunting in bad weather, and therefore wisely makes up his mind to stop at home. But our climate is variable, and there are many days in winter when it is impossible to tell whether it will rain or not, and when even the meteorological report in the newspaper is

thoroughly misguiding, and calculated to convey a wrong impression.

Those are miserable and unfortunate days for our Dandy.

He is thoroughly wretched once the deluge commences. True, his big white mackintosh almost entirely protects his frame, but as the wet raindrops chase each other down his cold face, he has a horrible conviction that his finely pencilled eyebrows, his carefully rouged cheeks, his cleverly dyed whiskers are fading away, washed into parti-coloured smudges, and leaving exposed to vision grey hairs, yellow crow's-feet and unsightly wrinkles. His first act on reaching home is to look in the looking-glass, and there he sees his worst fears confirmed. Twenty years are added to his age since he started at morn. His cheeks are grimed with black, owing to the inky rivulets that have trickled from eyebrows and whiskers, his collar is stained the same sable hue, and the hair of his wig hangs down

in lanky wisps, through which any one can detect the silvery foundation on which it reposes.

Alack ! alack ! these are cruel and disastrous days, which make him vow he will give up hunting altogether, and endeavour to resign himself to growing old with a good grace.

But he will never grow old really. He is a boy at heart, and always will remain so, whilst the instinct which makes him seek to conceal the ravages of Time is too strong to be conquered.

He fights a desperate battle with advancing years, and when at length he feels his days are numbered, remains true to the characteristics which have distinguished him through life. He calls the wife of his bosom to his side, and with feeble voice and flickering smile says—“Wife, put it in all the newspapers, and—and—be tender as to my age.”

Poor old Dandy !

Why should not we be tender to him also, and dwell rather on his simplicity, his inoffensiveness and unvarying good nature, than on his little vanities and conceits?

If it pleased him to fancy that, because he padded his coats, swelled out his chest, dyed his whiskers, wore a wig, and rouged his yellow cheeks, it made him appear gay and juvenile, why should not we fall in with his mood and favour the delusion?

Alone, in the sanctity of his own chamber, depend upon it he has had many a bad moment, when the words of the Preacher were sufficient chastisement for any eccentricities in which he chose to indulge.

If we had not a little folly amongst us, something to laugh at, and something to cry at, what an insufferable world this would be — a wcrld of Pharisees and Prigs.

VIII.—THE FARMER.

Not one in twenty of those who follow the fox take into sufficient consideration the enormous debt of gratitude which they owe to the farmer. The majority of people seem to think that when they ride over his wheat, force open his gates and break down his fences, they have a perfect right to do so, and the proprietor has no business whatever to complain.

Now, this is not only a very unsportsman-like, but also a very erroneous view of the case.

It cannot be too emphatically stated that without the consent and co-operation of the farmers, hunting could not exist for even a single day. They have the power to strike

its death-knell at any moment, and it is solely owing to their goodwill and courtesy that the Chase continues to flourish. Folks should bear this fact in mind, and abstain as much as possible from inflicting unnecessary damage.

If all were to combine, a great deal might be done, especially as heedlessness is generally at the bottom of the mischief. In the ardour of a good run the hard-riding gentry, and even those who are not particularly keen about being with the hounds, will continually let young stock escape from their field, little thinking how much time and trouble it takes to drive them back again ; and few sportsmen hesitate to gallop over growing crops, in spite of the master's remonstrances.

These things should not be. They are opposed to fair play, common sense, and above all, to self-interest. In return for what the farmer has to put up with, every one should study his wishes, even at the

expense of losing his or her place, which, after all, is not a very serious misfortune.

A certain proportion of farmers, luckily for them, possess independent means, and in spite of bad times and the prevailing agricultural depression, are able to keep a horse or two and hunt pretty regularly. They enjoy the sport as much, if not more than most people, and when hounds travel over their land are always the first to show the way across it, or to lift gates from hinges with a magnanimous disregard for consequences. No better fellow lives, and he is the life and soul of fox-hunting.

Even if every fence on his property were broken down, he would scorn to utter a complaint to the authorities. He is a thorough sportsman, keen as mustard. Although his poultry dwindle, his lambs disappear, and he suffers in a variety of different ways, he never says a word ; and in the covert close by his house there is always a litter of foxes to be found.

He, and others like him are a pillar of strength to the Hunt. All through the summer he walks a goodly number of puppies, and keeps them entirely at his own expense. The cups which from time to time he has won with them are treasured as family heirlooms, and shine on the oak mantelpiece of his best parlour. In the field no one is more popular or more respected. It is a pleasure to see his bright rosy countenance, on which health and good humour are legibly written. The fair sex find in him a staunch champion; for he possesses a spirit of chivalry fast dying out among the gentlemen of the nineteenth century. It is his honest voice that invariably shouts, "Make way for the lady," and if by any chance he sees her unfairly deprived of her turn at the fence his anger breaks loose immediately and vents itself in an indignant "Shame!" which earns him many a smile of gratitude.

In short, he is the pink of courtesy, and

there are noble lords whose manners are not equal to his. And when hounds run, how well he goes, how straight he rides, even although his horses are often a trifle under-bred and over-paced. But he makes up for these deficiencies by a thorough knowledge of the country, and by never being afraid to go the shortest way.

Every fence within a radius of several miles is familiar to him, and he can lead you in a bee line down to the only place where the brook is fordable, or the unjumpable bottom practicable.

Now and again he picks up a young horse cheap, and makes him ; riding him in dauntless fashion, regardless of tumbles, till he knows his business thoroughly. He is a capital man to buy from, as his animals have been well ridden, and he is content to take a smaller profit than a dealer. But as a rule the dealer knows every farmer in the county who purchases or breeds young horses, and the

opportunities of acquiring a decent hunter without the intervention of a third party are daily becoming scarcer as the demand increases.

The hard-riding farmer is so familiar to us all that to dwell further on his merits appears superfluous. Every time we go out hunting we can witness them and admire them.

But there is another class of farmer who also contributes greatly to the sport and whose virtues are liable to be overlooked, from the mere fact of their belonging to a passive rather than to an active order. We allude to those who don't hunt, and who care nothing for the chase. These men are sometimes abused, and in nearly every instance most undeservedly. We are as much indebted to them as to their fox-loving brethren, indeed rather more so; for the latter get considerable compensation for the depreciation of their property, in the shape of amusement,

whilst the former derive no satisfaction whatever from allowing their fields to be scampered over by two or three hundred thoughtless and careless people, who do not take even ordinary precautions to avoid inflicting damage on the owner.

Is it any wonder if they grumble a little at times ? If we were in their place should not we grumble also, and resent the oft-recurring intrusion as a nuisance and a personal insult ?

They have no sporting tastes, and only ask to be left alone—to live and let live ; and in their hearts would rejoice if hunting were done away with altogether. They look upon it as an oppression of the poor by the rich, an ostentatious display of wealth, unwise and unseemly in the depressed condition of the country. They are all for liberty and equality, and think every man should be king of his own domain. Some years ago, when times were good, they neither liked nor disliked

hunting. Their feelings were neutral and their pockets were not perceptibly affected one way or the other. At least, they bore the strain better. But in these days, ideas have undergone a revolution. The prospects of farming are so bad that every sixpence has become of consequence, and that lean fleshless maiden, Economy, turns much otherwise healthy blood to gall. It is easy enough to be good-natured as long as you have plenty of money. Nothing renders a man so surly as the lack of it. Landlords complain of the quantity of wire now used by tenants on their farms. They forget that wire is about the cheapest form of fencing procurable. If they don't like it, why don't they furnish timber to put up rails in its place? Strange that the idea does not seem to strike them! It is unreasonable to expect a man who does not hunt himself, and whose proclivities are disinclined to the Chase, not to consult his own interest in the important matter of

pounds, shillings and pence. Why should the farmer who never gets on to a horse from one year to another, pay for people to come galloping over his land? If they needs must gallop over it let them make good any damage inflicted. Nothing can be simpler.

This is fair enough, and yet how seldom do we hear the non-sporting farmer's side of the question discussed in an open, equitable manner. If he makes the smallest remonstrance, he is generally dubbed "a cross-grained old brute." As often as not he is a very hardly-used individual, naturally somewhat aggrieved at finding his property little respected, and himself treated as a perfect nonentity. A few considerate words, a judicious payment now and again, when the Hunt is manifestly in the wrong, and above all, some acknowledgment from its more influential members, would go far to allay the feeling of soreness often engendered. Gentlemen are very foolish who fail to conciliate

the farmers, for they are their best friends, and to convert them into enemies is a terrible mistake. The wonder is, not that an occasional farmer now and again should warn people off his land, but that the whole body do not join in a hue and cry against hunting.

They are a long-suffering race, and in these days have many difficulties to contend with. Therefore those who follow the fox should never lose an opportunity of proving their gratitude for the generosity which alone permits them to pursue their favourite pastime.

When a gate has been shivered to pieces, a fence badly broken down, they should not wait for a formal complaint to be lodged, but should club together among themselves to repair the loss as speedily as possible. Such actions, if done spontaneously, would go a long way towards maintaining amicable relations. The meanness of the rich is answerable for a good deal of the existing discon-

tent. The British farmer is a splendid fellow, taking him all round, and his growl is frequently worse than his bite. Let courtesy be met with courtesy, instead of, as it often is, by rudeness and indifference. Let generosity on the one side call forth generosity on the other, and above all let the policy of field and master be one of conciliation towards the class of men who thoroughly deserve to be treated with kindness and consideration in return for their sacrifices made on behalf of fox-hunting. A soft answer turneth away wrath, and an angry man armed with a pitch-fork is more easily disarmed by pleasant speech and a disposition to listen to his grievances, than by a volley of indignant oaths, whose only result is that both parties lose their temper and come to an open breach, certainly to the disadvantage of Nimrod.

We should remember that the land is not ours to do what we like with, and that a stout, elderly farmer having a dozen young

children all tearing at his purse-strings, cannot be expected to look upon fox-hunting with the same enthusiasm as a rich young man who has plenty of money to spend, and nobody to spend it on but himself.

Different circumstances give rise to very different notions, and poverty quickly slackens zeal. When you begin to say to yourself, "It will cost me half-a-crown to have that gap made up," and the same half-crown is wanted to pay for a dozen various things, the question comes quite naturally, "Why should I allow that gap to be made? Nobody even says, Thank you, for the pains I am put to." Farmers, as a body, will not stop fox-hunting so long as they can afford to support it, and matters are conducted in a fair and gentlemanly way. And if times change, the people assuming the upper hand claim the land as their own, and pooh pooh a sport in which they do not join, it will be unfair to lay the blame at the farmer's

door. Only when that day comes, England may take a back seat among the nations.

Her children will miss the nursery ground in which their finest qualities, "pluck," dash, and gallantry have been fostered, and sink to the level of the soft, effeminate foreigner, who regards *le sport* as a species of madness.

Meanwhile, let us thank the farmers for the good times they have given us in the past, and still hope that the friendliness and conciliation on either side, those good times may continue in the future. What a terrible revolution would be worked in English country life if each county could not produce its pack of hounds. Think of the boredom of the men, the regrets of the women. Accidents there must always be, but fox-hunting compensates for them all by the health, the exhilaration, and cordial good-fellowship that it brings. So, three cheers for our best friend, the farmer.

IX.—THE “FUNK-STICK.”

OF all the people who come out hunting, no one is so sincerely to be pitied as the “Funk-stick.” In every respect he is a most miserable man, full of abject fears of which he is horribly ashamed, yet which he cannot conquer or conceal by any effort. Constitutional timidity renders him a perfect martyr. Only the unfortunate wretch himself knows the agonies of mind which he endures—the doubts, the terrors, the dismal forebodings of imaginary danger, worse even than actual disaster. Why he hunts is a mystery; since, far from giving pleasure, the chase affords him nothing but pain. The only solution of the problem seems to be that years and custom have made him a complete slave to habit, and

he has not sufficient moral courage to break away from the chains by which he is bound. Besides, he has no other resources, and hunting is a means of killing time. Yet what tortures the poor man undergoes. He wakes early in the morning with an oppressive feeling that something very unpleasant is going to happen during the day, and before his eyes are thoroughly open he remembers with a sinking spirit what that something is.

Hounds meet at the kennels, after not having been able to hunt for over a week on account of severe frost, which has now disappeared. He feels like a man who, having obtained a short reprieve, is suddenly informed that his last hour is come.

Good heavens! how abominably fresh the horses will be, after standing idle in their stable for so long. No amount of talking ever can persuade the factotum who presides over his equine department to give them enough work. It is useless trying to impress

upon him that four hour's daily exercise is but just sufficient to keep an animal in good health. And now he will have to suffer from the vagaries of his steeds. The mere thought is terrifying.

He had decided over night to ride a recent purchase, a beautiful blood mare, but that was after dinner. In the morning he repents this determination, and feels that nothing shall induce him to get on her back until he knows a great deal more about her. She is certain to kick him off, or buck, or shy, or indulge in some equally alarming antic. He knows beforehand that his groom will receive the message contemptuously, but he cannot help it. For a time he struggles against his fears, but in the end he has to succumb to them, and sends out word to say that he has changed his mind, and will hunt Rochester, a confidential animal approaching his twentieth year, instead of Queen Bess.

The reply is that Rochester has been out

exercising, and owing to the slippery state of the ground it would be unadvisable to hunt a horse whose forelegs are shaky and liable at any moment to give way altogether. The "Funk-stick" is quite aware of this fact without hearing it repeated ; but what is he to do ? It is easier for him to buy a new hunter than to summon up courage to ride a fresh one, and of all his stud, Rochester is the animal he feels least afraid of. So Rochester, in spite of having been fed and watered, is saddled and our hero starts in fear and trembling. It is a gusty morning, and a cold north-east wind comes sweeping over the uplands. The old horse, not liking the sharp air, after his warm stable, rounds his back a bit, going down the first hill from home.

Oh ! what an agonizing pang shoots knife-like through the heart of his rider ! That gentleman feels positively *ill* with apprehension, and from moment to moment anticipates

some frightful calamity. He is far too uneasy to enter into conversation with any of the numerous acquaintances who overtake him. If the truth were known he is downright afraid to let his animal break into a canter. The awful shadow of "what might happen" weighs upon his spirit like a ton of lead. He cannot shake off its depressing influence. His nerves quiver, his teeth chatter, but not from the cold alone. Other causes tend to produce this result, though his pallid cheek flushes red with shame as he puts a name to them. He is too anxious to be able to talk, and the only remark he can jerk out to his friends as they pass by is:

"Awfully bad going to-day. The ground is in a most dangerous condition."

"Nonsense, my good fellow!" they laugh back in reply; "you'll soon forget all about it when hounds run. It's more slippery on the roads than anywhere else. Come, hurry up or you'll be late."

He shakes his head and gives a melancholy smile. If anything were to prevent his hunting that day he knows he should not be sorry. It's all very well for other people to "hurry up," but how can he? Were he to do so, Rochester might whisk his tail, cock his ears, or misdemean himself generally. Such danger is too great to be lightly incurred. By immense caution he hopes to be able to avert it.

His troublesome heart goes thump, thump against his ribs, when at length he is forced to quit the safe and friendly road and strike across a line of bridle-gates and fields. The latter are dotted with horsemen and women on their way out to covert, and at sight of them and of the fresh green pastures, Rochester distends his nostrils, snorts, and oh, dear! oh, dear! proceeds to give a little playful bound into the air. Our hero immediately commences hauling frantically at his head, and in an agonized voice cries out with

stentorian lungs: "Quiet, horse! oh, do, *do* be quiet!"

Every one explodes with laughter, and even Rochester seems to feel a contempt for his rider, for unheeding this beseeching appeal, he snatches at the bit, breaks into a canter, and out of pure light-heartedness, gives another flourish of his heels.

Tears start to the wretched "Funk-stick's" eyes; he is so desperately frightened. His first instinct is to dismount and walk home, but people surround him on all sides. Surreptitiously he manages to wipe away the signs of his weakness and blows his nose with great energy and determination. Arrived at the meet, things do not improve. Neither does his courage, which by this time has reached a very low ebb. That old brute Rochester refuses to stand still for a second. He sidles about, paws the ground and edges up to the hounds in a most alarming and disagreeable fashion. In

fact, he keeps his unhappy rider in a constant state of trepidation. The "What might happen," is rapidly being magnified into the "What will and must happen."

By this time the poor "Funk-stick" is so nervous that he is reduced to a state of almost absolute silence. He has no longer any spirit or inclination to converse, and is not a good enough actor to dissemble how much he suffers. His craven fear renders him more or less callous of appearances. It dominates his whole nature and crushes every other emotion by its overwhelming strength.

He cruelly disappoints those ladies of his acquaintance who do not know him intimately. Meeting him in a country house or at a dinner party, they may have voted him a cheery, pleasant fellow; for off a horse he is a completely different man. Out hunting, they ask themselves what on earth has come to him? He seems to avoid their society, has not a word to say for himself and only just

escapes being downright rude. How could they ever have fancied he was nice, and capable of being converted into a husband?

Poor "Funk stick!" If only they could look down into the depths of his shifting quicksand of a heart—a thing as lightly ruffled as a blade of grass by every passing wind—and were aware of the torturing fears disturbing it, no doubt their compassion would be aroused and they would pity rather than blame its unhappy owner.

Unhappy truly, for he is the possessor of a peculiarly sensitive nature and despises his own cowardice, even whilst he succumbs to it. The efforts he makes to conceal this terrible infirmity are as pathetic as they are futile. He will talk ever so bravely when an absolutely unjumpable country lies before him, and he knows that the whole Field will be forced to fall back on a line of gates. He rides up then in a tremendous hurry and pushes through with the first half-dozen,

looking complacently round when a check occurs, as much as to say, "Ha, ha! who is up?" He does his very best to make a show of gallantry when he is perfectly certain that no calls will be made upon his courage.

If he gets hold of a sympathetic listener, he will tell him quite gravely that he is only prevented from jumping owing to having sprained a muscle in his thigh, which causes exquisite agony; or that he has knocked his knee very badly against a gate-post and injured the cartilage; or run a thorn into his great toe, or a variety of different excuses. He is seldom at a loss to explain how he would if he could, but doesn't because he mayn't. He tries hard to keep up a semblance of valour, but only complete strangers are deceived by his statements.

His form is known to a nicety, and if the truth must be told, many of his comrades in the hunting field look upon him with profound contempt. To see him turn away

from a fence when half-a-dozen women and children have been over it, is certainly not calculated to inspire much respect for his manliness or courage. He is, indeed, a real object of pity.

Unluckily the “Funk-stick” possesses a considerable influence.

There are always a large number of people who fluctuate between the borderland of bravery and cowardice, and to whom example is extremely contagious. Their attitude is determined by their environments, and, like sheep, they follow the leader.

Now, when our friend “Funk-stick” enters a field, and not seeing an easy egress, at once begins calling out, “Don’t go there ; don’t go there. I know that place of old, and it’s a most horrible one to jump,” a very numerous contingent scuttle off in his footsteps, not even waiting to see if he speaks the truth. Their anxiety has been aroused, and they prefer to avoid the danger rather

than face it. In truth, it is a comical sight to see the whole of the "Funk-stick" division stopped by some little, insignificant gap, and to witness the cautious way in which, after many peeps and much hesitation, the bravest member will proceed to dismount, clear all the thorns away, then walk over on foot, dragging his horse behind him, to an accompanying chorus of "Bravas! Bravas!" He has shown them the thing can be done, and some even pluck up sufficient spirit to follow his example on horseback. Time seems of no importance to this gallant brigade when they come to a fence. They plant themselves before it with a species of dogged patience, and would wait all day rather than have to jump it. They bore, and creep, and crawl and scramble, but they have a rooted objection to a *bonâ fide* leap. Very few venture on so desperate a deed.

But if they lose precious moments at their

fences, the rush they make for a road is something truly magnificent. An avalanche let loose is a joke to them, and our "Funk-stick," suddenly turned brave, heads the cavalcade. Nevertheless, he derives little enjoyment from these wild gallops over the macadam. His conscience accuses him all the while, and scoffs at his timidity. It leaves him no peace, for craven fear, such as his, brings its own punishment.

As a matter of fact, the pains he endures are something inconceivable, whilst the efforts he makes, the resolutions he forms to master his nervousness are quite pitiable; for they never lead to any improvement. The truth is, he can't help himself: it all comes to that.

He has been born with a shrinking, easily frightened nature, and it cleaves to him even in manhood. How gladly would he change it if he could; but he can't. The mysterious laws which govern the universe are too

strong for him. His mother may have received a shock before his birth, his nurse may have frightened him in early childhood by stories of ghosts and supernatural beings. There are always a hundred outside causes to account for the result. Timorous the "Funk-stick" was brought into the world, and timorous he will go out of it, dreading death even more than he dreads a big fence, and yielding up his feeble life in an agony of apprehension.

Poor man ! poor "Funk-stick!"

Is it generous, or even fair, to despise him as much as we only too often do ?

He, like the rest of us, is but a creature of chance, of circumstance, and above all of evolution. How can it affect his stronger-nerved brethren if he prefers gates to hedges, roads to fields? Surely every one may hunt in the manner that pleases him or her best, without being abused and turned into thinly-disguised ridicule.

No doubt, a man worthy of the name should possess his fair share of courage ; but if he hasn't got it—and many haven't—is it his fault ?

No, certainly not. He did not elect to be born a coward of his own free-will, but had no choice in the matter. As a rule, the "Funk-stick" will escape unkind criticism if he has but the good sense to hold his tongue and makes no attempt to magnify his own indifferent performances. If he is humble, and does not pretend to any mock heroism, then the majority of his fellow-sportsmen will let him off easily enough. They are seldom venomous unless roused by petty trickery and imposture.

"But if he is not only a "Funk-stick," but an impudent braggart into the bargain, then woe be to him. He will meet with merciless scorn, scathing ridicule, and infinite contempt. Even the fair sex will turn against him, for if there is one thing that British men and

women hate more than another, that thing is humbug.

It is fatal to make out you ride well when you don't, to boast when you have absolutely nothing to boast about, and to glorify yourself into a lion when you are only a very, very weakly little mouse.



X.—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

WE cannot help admiring the man who goes first, in spite of his courage being sometimes dashed with a touch of brutality; but the Good Samaritan commands a still higher regard. Our hearts swell with love and gratitude whenever we think of him, and of his numerous acts of self-sacrifice. How often has he not helped us out of an emergency, or come to the rescue when we are in serious difficulties? He is literally brimming over with the milk of human kindness, and there is nothing on earth that he will not do to assist a fellow-creature.

Other men go wild about sport, and when hounds are running hard become so infected by the enthusiasm of the passing hour as to

appear dead to all external sentiments ; but he would let hounds, fox, huntsman go to the dogs rather than lose an opportunity of helping suffering humanity. If we fall at a fence, it is invariably the Good Samaritan who picks us up. If our horse gallops wildly off, he pursues him for miles, and never rests until he brings him back to his owner ; and if the unlucky steed tumbles into a deep ditch, and cannot be extricated except by rope and spade, he cheerfully gives up his day's pleasuring and sticks to you like a man and a Briton. He trots off to find labourers, sets everybody to work, gives the right instructions in the midst of a Babel of tongues, and of contrary opinions, and will not hear of leaving you until everything is well, and the animal saved from his perilous position. If he fancies you are hurt, he will ride all the way home with, and take almost as much care of you as a mother does of a child. In more serious cases, he gallops on ahead to

fetch the doctor, and has everything prepared before your arrival. He is the kindest, the best, and most unselfish fellow in the world, and never seems to think of himself ; all his thoughts and energies are concentrated on aiding other people.

Does he meet with gratitude ? Alas ! not much. Who does in this world ? He deserves immense credit, and, comparatively speaking, gets very little.

The fact is his many good actions are performed so quietly and unostentatiously, he regards them so entirely as a matter of course, that after a while folks adopt the same opinion. They see no reason whatever why he should not be allowed to open gates for the whole field, and let everybody pass through, if it pleases him. Of course, he wouldn't do so if he didn't like it ; they would not, and they judge him by themselves—a very common way of jumping at conclusions. On the same principle, if he

chooses to dismount at every awkward fence that proves a “stopper” and tear away the binders until an easy passage is made, there can be no possible reason why they should not take advantage of his good-nature without necessarily being obliged to wait and help him to re-mount. *They* did not ask him to get down; he did it of his own accord.

All the same very few people go out hunting who, either directly or indirectly, do not profit by the presence of the Good Samaritan. He is the least aggressive or intrusive of men, yet whenever a little timely assistance is required he seems, as it were, to drop from the clouds.

The ladies regard him with peculiar tenderness, and he inspires quite a fraternal sentiment amongst their ranks. He is not a person to flirt with, but he is a person always to apply to in case of need. His staidness and solidity give a wonderful sense of pro-

tection. They feel safe and well cared for when riding about with him.

They know that if their girths want tightening, or their stirrup shortening, and they appeal to their husbands and brothers, grumpy words are likely to be the result. It is no light matter to ask most men to help a female in distress. She feels the aid is given grudgingly, and a black mark, so to speak, is scored up against her in the future, as a bother and a nuisance.

But the Good Samaritan has no black marks. He never thinks that he is wasting his time, losing his place or falling to the rear, when it is within his power to administer to the wants of others. Such reflections do not cross his mind. He is only too happy to be of use, and gives his services in a generous, ungrudging and uncalculating spirit.

With the farmers he is most popular, and justly so, for they have a rare friend in him.

He is always the first to cry out “ ‘Ware wheat,” and to check the too impetuous ardour of the field, when galloping helter-skelter over some poor man’s growing crops. He shows his forethought and consideration in a hundred different ways, and always has the agriculturist’s interest at heart. Would that his example were more frequently followed by those who profess to be good sportsmen, but who think of nothing save their own personal amusement, and whose sole idea is to out-do their companions.

If some rough young colt escapes from the hovel in which it has taken shelter, our Good Samaritan, heedless that the chase is sweeping on, will at once ride after it, and drive it back again; or he will stand, cracking his whip, in order to prevent a flock of sheep from getting through a gateway, quite unmoved by the sight of all his comrades, ahs-tenting ahead with feverish speed.

When the lambing season comes round, it is no uncommon thing for him to dismount from his horse, pick up some poor, frightened little wanderer in his arms, and restore it to the bleating and anxious mother, who dares not approach within a certain distance of those terrifying hounds.

If any stranger comes out hunting, having forgotten his sandwich case and flask, our friend immediately offers him the contents of his own, and insists on his going shares, even if he does not empty them entirely.

“But, my dear sir, I am depriving you,” remonstrates the stranger feebly.

“Pooh, pooh, what does that matter?” comes the generous answer. “Never mind about me.”

The virtues of the Good Samaritan are more than ever conspicuous at a fence. It is impossible to abstain from recognizing them. When others are bustling, shoving, swearing, he remains perfectly calm, is never

in a hurry, consequently never jealous nor unfair like a large proportion of hunting people. If he sees anyone battling with a fractious steed, even although he be but a rough rider in everybody's way, he will always yield his place with a benevolent courtesy, admirable in its total self-abnegation. And even when folks who have not the excuse of an unmanageable horse take mean advantage of his good nature, as they frequently do, the only reproof they elicit is a "Go on, go on, I can wait, and apparently you can't."

He rides his animals with care, and as one who loves them. He could no more bully and abuse them, as some men do, than fly. Indeed, few things excite his anger more than to see a poor brute hit fiercely over the head, or jobbed viciously in the mouth, simply because, with the best will in the world, it may happen to have made some slight mistake over a fence. His honest face grows red

with indignation at the sight, and although not given to judging his neighbours severely, he turns away, feeling an instinctive dislike for the rider, in whom his swift perceptions tell him some manly element is wanting.

When any casualty occurs the Good Samaritan is always to the fore, irrespective of class or persons. A groom, riding a wild young horse, tears through a blind ditch, and rolls head-over-heels, breaking three ribs in his fall. The man lies motionless on the ground, his limbs doubled up in a horrible tortuous manner, and looks like one from whom the life has departed. The foremost horsemen draw rein, glance at him commiseratingly, and exclaim, "Ah, poor fellow! He's Mr. So-and-so's groom," then ride off, as if fearful of being detained. Of course if they were wanted they would stop; but no doubt there are plenty of people to look after him, and, moreover,

hounds have just picked up the line, and appear as if they were settling to their work in earnest.

Such reasoning as this does not hold good with our kind hearted Samaritan. To him a man with three broken ribs is a man, whether he be a poor groom or a rich duke. In truth, he would rather help the former, for if his grace were to fall only too many friends would immediately rush to his assistance, whereas plain John Smith is passed by a score of cavaliers who all leave it to some one else to pick him up.

So our friend dismounts from his horse, raises the fallen man's shoulders, rests them against his knee, gives the sufferer a drop of brandy out of his flask, and, aided by three stout kindly farmers, proceeds to carry him on a hurdle to the nearest cottage, where they tenderly deposit their semi-conscious burden on an old horse-hair couch. This done, he rides off in search of a medical man,

and makes arrangements about procuring a trap. He thinks nothing whatever of giving up his day's sport, and all his energies are absorbed in trying to ease the wounded man, and, if possible, to save him pain. And though John Smith is only a groom occupying a humble sphere in life, he has a heart, and is much more touched by and grateful for kindness than many a fine gentleman, who looks upon it as his right and his due, and forgets the services rendered directly he regains his health.

But the Good Samaritan never expects thanks. They make him feel shy and uncomfortable, for to do good comes naturally to him. It is a heaven-born instinct, and in gratifying it he only follows the promptings of his nature. He possesses a fine-fibred and chivalrous disposition, which renders him a veritable King Arthur of the hunting field. He has not a mean or ignoble thought. His great tender heart is easily moved to pity,

and suffering in any form never fails to appeal to it. All his strength he places at the service of the weak, deeming it a strong man's part to protect women and children, youths and dumb animals, instead of profiting by their feebleness to display his superior might.

What matters it if the kindness of his spirit prevents him from riding very hard, or if he is giving up places when he ought to be stealing them, making way instead of pushing forward, quietly effacing himself in lieu of struggling with his neighbours at a gateway?

Others may jump fences that he has not even seen. They may have been with hounds, occupying a glorious position in the van, whilst he was plodding away in the rear picking up cripples. They have the honour of seeing the fox dismembered, and he is trotting about, shutting farmers' gates and otherwise attending to their property.

What of that?

Whether he be first or last, he is the finest gentleman in the whole of the hunting field, and those who laugh at him are not worthy to tie his shoe-strings.

He is better than ourselves, less selfish, more charitable and gracious. so naturally we find it a little hard to praise his superior qualities.

Nevertheless, after our own unworthy fashion, we are grateful for the kindnesses received at his hands. In times of misfortune, such as overtake us all, the hunting field would seem but a very sorry place without the Good Samaritan.

When the hard riders pass us by with a careless “Not hurt, are you?” he flies to the rescue. When our boon companions look another way, for fear we may expect them to stop, he comes galloping up, his kind face working with solicitude.

Oh, Good Samaritan! Oh, dear, big-

hearted fellow, let us give you your due, and reverence you as a being made of infinitely finer materials than the great commonplace majority of the human race.



XI.—THE HOSPITABLE MAN.

THE hospitable man is always a popular one, since nothing appeals so surely to people's favour as plying them with plenty to eat and to drink. This he understands thoroughly, and is profuse in his invitations, showering them with great impartiality on the numerous acquaintances, masculine and feminine, he makes in the hunting field.

He himself is a regular *bon viveur*, with a keen appreciation of all good things appertaining to the culinary art. True, the increasing rotundity of his waistcoat, whose line of beauty grows yearly more and more curved, now and again affords subject for serious reflection ; but he has a happy knack of evading disagreeable thought, and putting

it off to another day. He thoroughly enjoys the various delicacies which he forces upon his guests, and sets a highly contagious example by the hearty manner in which he attacks the dishes, as much as to say, "These things are not meant to look at, but to eat. Therefore, fire away, and don't stand on ceremony."

His great delight is when the hounds meet at his house. This is always the signal for a feast ; and directly the fixture is publicly announced, he goes among his friends, as happy as an old hen cackling over her eggs, and says to each one in a mysterious and confidential whisper, full of pride and self-importance, "Look here, my dear fellow, what do you think ? The hounds are at my place next Saturday. Now mind and come early. You will see how much respected I am by the aristocracy. Get up half-an-hour sooner than usual ; you won't regret it. Do you know what I am going to do now the thing is

settled? I am going to run up to town on Thursday; yes, actually give up a day's hunting, on purpose to buy a piece of good Scotch beef at my friend Mr. Cocks', in Jermyn Street. The meat you get here is not eatable. It's so infernally tough."

"But what a lot of trouble," suggests his companion, who would not forego a day's hunting for all the beef in the world. "It hardly seems worth it."

"Ah! don't speak to me of the trouble, as long as the things are good. Do you think I would ask my friends inside my house and give them bad meat? No, certainly not. I should be ashamed of myself. I pay a shilling a pound to Mr. Cocks for my beef. A shilling a pound is a great deal, but then it's of very different quality from what you can buy here; it positively melts in your mouth." And the old fellow smacks his lips in anticipation. Then he sidles up to his listener, gives him a friendly nudge, and, with a

knowing wink, adds, "Now mind you come early, for there'll be a bottle or two of my famous port out on Saturday. That's the sort of jumping-powder to put heart into a man. After half-a-dozen glasses, I'd ride at the biggest fence ever planted in this country."

Thus the kind, garrulous fellow runs on, and will take no denial. His feelings are terribly hurt if any one attempts to make an excuse, and nearly all his acquaintances are entrapped beforehand into promising that they will enter his hospitable doors on the morning of the meet.

When the important day arrives—for he looks upon hounds meeting at his house as one of the greatest events of the year—from an early hour he is in a state of fuss and bustle, going down into the cellar with his butler, and reverently bringing up one dirt-encrusted bottle after another, paying repeated visits to the kitchen, and personally superintending every arrangement for the

forthcoming festivity. By half-past ten o'clock all is ready, and with a species of proud rapture he looks at the long dining-table, enlarged to its full size, and literally laden with delicacies.

At one end a huge round of the celebrated Scotch beef, so familiar by repute to the whole Hunt, occupies a prominent position, and looks sufficient to feed a regiment of hungry soldiers. At the other, an enormous cold roast turkey, bursting with stuffing and garnished with sausages, ornaments the board. The side dishes consist of chicken, ham, tongue, sandwiches, mutton pies, biscuits, plum cake, ginger-bread nuts, &c., &c. Bottles of wine, soda and seltzer water are freely dotted about in between. The only pity is that people have come to hunt and not to eat. This thought flashes regrettfully across the provider's brain.

Meantime folks begin to arrive, and the master of the house, his jolly, rubicund face

beaming with hospitality, stands at the front door, and invites, entreats and implores every fresh-comer to enter and partake of the good cheer within. Nothing vexes him more than if they refuse, asserting that they are not hungry.

“God bless my soul!” he bursts forth. “If you can’t eat, you can drink, surely. Take my word for it, I’ll not poison you. Everybody in the county can tell you what sort of stuff my old port is.”

“Thank you, thank you, my good friend, but I never indulge at this hour of the morning.”

The hospitable man looks after the abstainer in disgust as he rides away, and behind his grizzled moustache murmurs indignantly, “D——d fool!”

He meets with several vexations. Amongst others, it grieves him deeply to see how little the Scotch beef and similar substantial dainties are appreciated.

"Dear me! dear me!" he exclaims in tones of real concern. "What's the matter with you fellows? There the things are, and why the devil can't you eat them? Do you suppose they are only to be looked at?"

It is useless for the guests to try and explain that they have but very recently swallowed an excellent breakfast, and are totally unable to get up another appetite so soon. The old fellow presses, urges and insists, and all with such genuine kindness, that finally they yield to the force of circumstances, and allow an enormous helping of underdone meat to be heaped upon their plate. To please their host they take a mouthful or two, are informed that they are eating Mr. Cocks' prime Scotch beef at a shilling a pound, and with a sigh of resignation gulp it down by the aid of a glass of sherry or cherry brandy, then beat a hasty retreat into the open air.

The entertainer, thanks to the excellence of

his own port, has by this time become exceedingly cheery and loquacious. With infinite reluctance, he allows one relay of friends to depart, then goes out into the garden in search of another batch, who, whether they like it or not, are stuffed with eatables and drinkables, similarly to their predecessors. The gentlemen don't come very much to the front on these occasions. The hospitable man pityingly sums them up as "poor feeders ;" but amongst the farmers he finds many a kindred spirit. Fresh from a long jog to covert, and maybe an early ride round their farm in addition, several of them play an excellent knife and fork, and attack the Scotch beef with a will. This cheers the cockles of their host's expansive heart, and he watches them eat with unfeigned pleasure. He feels at last that he is not throwing his pearls before swine, but offering them to people capable of appreciating their good points.

“Capital piece of beef that, eh, Brown ? ” he says, smiling benignly.

“Furst rate, sir,” is the reply. “I never tasted a better. It’s a pleasure to put a tooth into it.”

“Aha ! Brown, you’re a man who knows what’s what, and can do justice to a good bit of meat when it’s set before him.”

“I hope so, sir. I should be very ungrateful if I couldn’t. But this is regular prime ; tender, juicy, and fine-fibred. We don’t get meat like that in these parts.”

“You’re right there. I bought it in London, of my friend Mr. Cocks in Jermyn Street.”

Whereupon, for about the twentieth time, he repeats the story of how, whenever hounds meet at his house, he makes a point of running up to town and paying Mr. Cocks’ establishment a visit.

“I never mind the expense,” he concludes, with honest pride. “I never let that stand

in the way on occasions like the present. I like to give my friends the best of everything, and then if they aren't satisfied, why it ain't my fault, eh?"

Messrs. Brown and Co. make a hearty meal, not forgetting to do full justice to the liquor. They linger round the well-spread board until hounds are on the point of throwing off, when at length they reluctantly tear themselves away. The hospitable man then proceeds to mount, though he experiences some little difficulty in introducing the point of his toe into the stirrup. It is by no means easy to stand still on one leg, and a curious haze, no doubt owing to the transition from a warm room to the cold atmosphere, obscures his eyesight. But these are only trifles, scarce worth mentioning, except very incidentally. He is in excellent spirits, and feels full of valour. He moves among the crowd with a sense of richly-deserved self-satisfaction, conscious that they have been

royally entertained, and can find nothing to complain of. His reputation for hospitality, for Scotch beef and old wine has been fully sustained. Strangers have seen how richly it is deserved, and witnessed the generous principles on which his establishment is conducted. His worst enemy could not accuse him of being niggardly or mean. This knowledge makes his heart swell with triumph.

The very foot people have been treated to bread, cheese and beer *ad libitum*. When they touch their hats respectfully, he cannot help feeling that the compliment is merited. How is it possible to prevent a man from being aware of his own amiable qualities, and considering them entitled to recognition?

Every now and again the good old fellow asks his friends to dinner. On these gala nights it behoves them to be very careful, for he plies them with so much vintage wine, such marvellous selections of brown sherry, delicate claret and enticing port, that they

are only too apt to suffer from the effects next morning, and rise from their couch with a splitting headache. As for their host, he is seemingly inured, for he eats, drinks, and mixes his liquors in a fashion which puts the younger generation to shame. They can't compete with him. At such times he grows very jovial and racy in his conversation. Peals of laughter issue from the dining-room. His after-dinner stories have the reputation of being surprisingly witty and excessively naughty, and are greeted with salvos of applause. All the young fellows eagerly accept an invitation from him to dine and sleep the night. They are sure of an amusing evening, free from all stiffness and ceremony, and the hospitable man has a peculiarly gracious manner, which makes everybody feel at home in his presence. He prefers to entertain, rather than be entertained, disliking long cold drives of many miles along country roads, and not caring

to quit his own snug rooms and warm fire-side.

In the hunting field he is a cheery, gregarious old soul, ever ready for a laugh, though, if the truth must be told, he is fonder of one at somebody else's expense than at his own. He likes to hear the latest gossip, and takes an intense interest in the doings and sayings of his neighbours. His cook and his cellar are never-failing sources of conversation. They play an important part in his life, for as he shrewdly observes, "Horses disappoint, friends annoy, but a good meal and a good bottle of wine are things that a man can always fall back upon with satisfaction."

It is impossible to help liking him ; he is such a kindly, generous, sociable creature. He does not bother his head about politics or the Eastern Question, and cares nothing for the encroachments of science on religion, the evils of over-population, or any of the

moving topics of the day. They occasion no disturbance in his equable and well-balanced mind, and he studies the *menu* of a morning with far more interest than he does the newspaper.

He has, however, one very pressing trouble. From time to time certain twinges of gout remind him that all flesh is mortal. His doctor recommends a simpler diet and total abstention from alcoholic drinks. The consequence is they have had a desperate quarrel.

“Darned idiot!” he growls to some bosom friend, of whose sympathy he feels certain beforehand. “Just as if life would be worth living without a good sound bottle of wine a day. That doctor of mine is of no use; I shall leave him. He takes my guineas, does me no good, and talks nonsense into the bargain. What confidence can one place in a fellow like that? The man’s a fool, and what’s more, he don’t understand my consti-

tution a bit. When a person has got gout his system wants building up; it's the greatest mistake in the world to lower it. Gout comes almost entirely from poverty of blood."

Few things vex the hospitable man more than, after an absence from home, to hear on his return that the hounds have run near his place.

"What!" he exclaims, "you killed in my field—the field below my house—and nobody went in! How's that? I must make inquiries. Are people to be starved because I happen to be away? It makes me mad to think of it. I feel positively ashamed. My servants—they have orders to ask everybody in. Why was it not done? People will say I am stingy—that I only entertain when I am there myself," and so on, and on.

It is real hard work to pacify him and to make him believe that no one for an instant

doubted his hospitality, especially after the many conspicuous proofs which he has given of it.

“ Ah,” he says with a sigh, “ the thing is done, and it’s no use talking, but I shall take good care it don’t happen again. Those lazy fellows of mine ought to have brought out trays with the wine directly they heard the hounds. It did not matter how far they had to go.”

Our friend is exceedingly partial to the fair sex, and they look upon him with great favour in return. His hearty, kindly manner sets them at their ease, and many a sip out of his flask do they enjoy on a cold, frosty morning. It delights him to see them smack their rosy lips and cry with a pretty air of affectation, “ Oh, how strong ! You bad, bad man ! How can you possibly drink such intoxicating stuff ? ”

He gives a knowing wink in return and says gravely, “ My dear, you are quite right.

I can't take much, any more than you can, but what little I have I like good."

So he goes through life ; hunting, eating and drinking, without any enemies, and with a vast number of friends ; some like him for himself, others for what they can get out of him, for, alas, disinterested affection is rare here below.

And when, one fine day, he succumbs to a fit of apoplexy, brought on by too full a habit of body, he is missed by the whole Hunt, who exclaim, "Ah, poor old chap, he wasn't half a bad sort in his way !"

Comrades of the hunting field, if you and I meet with any higher praise than this when our turn comes to jump our last fence, and feel the spring of a good horse under us for the last time, we may consider ourselves lucky. "Not a bad sort in his way" is high eulogy from the survivors, who are seldom given to enthusiasm.

XII.—THE JEALOUS WOMAN.

THE jealous woman is not a nice person at any time, but she is rather less so in the hunting field than in any other place ; perhaps because her peculiar failing is there rendered patent to the whole world. She cannot keep it sufficiently under control to prevent people who possess ordinary powers of observation from finding it out, or from noticing how unfairly she rides. Her spirit of emulation passes the customary bounds of politeness, and is too strong not to be resented and censured.

As a rule she is perfectly unconscious of the ridicule which her jealousy evokes, and would be very much surprised and very much annoyed if the comments of her fellow-sports-

men came to her ears. She is under the impression that she is the “observed of all observers,” and immensely admired. Her vanity even prevents her from seeing that the men are not as civil as they might be, and avoid her whenever they decently can.

The truth is, she treats them with such scant courtesy that they think there is no harm in paying her back in her own coin. They cease to regard her as a lady, and cannot associate her with anything either feminine or gentle. She is in their eyes that most odious of all creatures extant, an unsexed woman. So with all her pushing and shoving, bustling and cramming, she gains very little.

The gentlemen view her with a dislike bordering on disgust, and are unsparing in their criticisms. Quite unaware of the sentiments they entertain towards her, she endeavours over and over again to beguile them into conversation, and when hounds are not running, tries her utmost to ingratiate herself

in their favour, but her efforts in this direction are seldom crowned by success. The men hold obstinately aloof, refuse to smile at her witticisms or show any approval of her smart sayings. For she has a sharp tongue, and can demolish another women's reputation rather better than her neighbours. She is clever, caustic and amusing, has a nice figure, and is good-looking into the bargain ; and yet the male sex, with all these points in her favour, cannot forgive her for usurping their place at every fence they come to, and for seizing an unfair advantage over them on every possible occasion. Such conduct blots out all charm, and creates a feeling of anger and resentment in the masculine breast. Being a woman, they have not even the satisfaction of swearing at her, which adds insult to injury.

Ladies may ride as hard as anybody else, and yet ride in a feminine fashion, and not get in the way. The dangerous woman is bad enough,

but the jealous one is a thousand times worse. The former errs chiefly through ignorance and an exuberance of animal spirits that produces an intoxicating effect; but the latter can plead no such excuse. She knows quite well what she is about, and offends deliberately, altogether ignoring the precept of "Do as thou wouldst be done by." When under the influence of the insane passion that masters her, she is no longer mistress of herself, and will commit every species of absurdity. She will ride a desperate finish in a ploughed field up to her horse's hocks, whilst hounds have actually never left the covert, and are still hunting busily inside, simply because she happens to catch sight of a female skirt fluttering ahead. With elbows squared, and arms, hands, legs at work, she imagines that she is doing great things, calculated to rouse the enthusiasm of the whole field.

She never hears the laughter of the by-

standers, or sees the contemptuous smiles that wreath every face. A mad struggle for supremacy rages within her breast. It is as if a devil had taken possession of her and converted her into an irresponsible being.

She gallops madly down a road, bespattering her feminine rivals with mud, never dreams of apologizing, and does not draw rein until she has far outstripped them. Then she looks round triumphantly, her face all flushed and heated, and wearing an expression of satisfaction, which seems to say, "There! I am first. It's not a bit of use your trying to get before me, for I shan't put up with such an indignity for a minute. You must see how much better I can ride than you, so what is the good of your trying to compete?"

Most women confine their jealousy exclusively to members of their own sex, but there are some, though happily they are in the

minority, who extend it even to the men, and who cannot endure to see more than one or two of the very hardest riders of the whole hunt in front of them. Their poor horses are dreadfully to be pitied, for they treat them with a harshness and a want of consideration that borders on downright cruelty. The animal is regarded as a mere machine, a galloping and jumping piece of mechanism, which must never get out of order, and must go as long as the rider chooses, without respect to health, humour, or fatigue. Such people are not fit to have horses. They hit them, they urge them, they let heavy gates slam on their sensitive quarters, in order to slink through, and they gallop them up hill and down, through bogs and over plough, and don't once pause to take a very necessary pull. To get on, on, on at all hazards is the only thing they care for, and this they call horsemanship and riding to hounds. Ugh !

Poor, noble steed ! The more generous he is, the greater is the advantage taken of him. A jealous woman is not worthy of a good horse. She should always ride a sluggard, since pity, mercy, tenderness, every feminine attribute are merged in the frantic desire to occupy a prominent place, and let no other female get ahead. Ambition is turned to striving, courage to mean emulation ; good sense flies, and envy, hatred and malice reign in its place.

If some similarly-constituted individual—for there are jealous men as well as jealous women—attempts to take her turn, she is the first to cry out in tones of severe indignation, “Don’t cut in, sir. Now, sir, what are you doing ?” or words to that effect. But she thinks nothing of doing so herself. In truth, it is her usual practice. The fact is, she is not a true sportswoman. Her love of the chase is not a genuine, but a spurious passion. It is the competition of one person riding

against another that rouses her to enthusiasm, and not the beautiful sight of a pack of well-bred fox-hounds flashing like a streak of silver over the green pastures in pursuit of their quarry.

Little cares she for either fox or hounds. “Who was first, second and third? Did you see where I was, and how well I rode?” are the sole thoughts occupying her mind. Everything else is as nought in comparison. She has neither a kindly nor generous nature. When other women get falls and meet with accidents, though she pretends to condole, in her heart she rejoices at their misfortunes. She seems to imagine that in avoiding similar disasters she is possessed of superior skill and knowledge.

She can be pleasant enough to the ladies who don’t “go.” They are not in her way, and don’t offend her susceptibilities; but those who ride hard inspire sentiment of such extreme hostility, that she has the

greatest difficulty in concealing them. Her artificial politeness and vinagery - sweet speeches deceive no one. They are too laboured, and lack sincerity. Genuine kindness is felt to be wanting. Everybody laughs at the jealous woman behind her back, and she has hardly a single friend, male or female, in the whole hunt. Cold civility or disdainful tolerance greets her on all sides.

If only she could divest herself of a certain uneasy consciousness, which makes her erroneously suppose that people take a vital interest in her performances, and never weary of discussing them, she would enjoy the chase a great deal more than she does at present. But she can't realize the very simple fact that nobody cares twopence whether she be first or last, jumps or doesn't jump, and that she is not the central point of attention, on which two or three hundred pairs of eyes are continually riveted. Folks

as a rule have enough to do looking after themselves, without looking after her, and in the majority of cases are taken up with their own doings, not those of their neighbours. Number One is of such paramount importance to the jealous woman, that she can't understand how it is the interesting numeral does not prove equally so to her companions.

If anything goes wrong out hunting, her horse refuses, or she gets left behind, indignant at occupying a backward position, she prefers to come straight home, and is ready to cry with vexation and mortification. All her pleasure for the day is gone. She can't reconcile herself to the humiliation of riding about with the shirkers and roadsters. For these reasons she seldom derives any real enjoyment from a day's hunting. So many things have to go right, and even if they do, there is nearly always a drawback, in the shape of some other hard-riding woman, perhaps younger and with more nerve, who

throws down the gauntlet. It is impossible to be happy under such conditions. Her philosophy is not sufficient to enable her to see how very immaterial it is whether Brown, Jones, or Robinson holds the proud position of heading the hard-riding division. The triumphs of the chase are very fleeting, and often depend quite as much upon the horse as upon the rider, and yet she hankers after them with an inordinate eagerness, amounting to positive folly.

Out of the saddle, the jealous woman is not unfrequently a pleasant and lady-like person, both conversible and intelligent; but in it she assumes a different character altogether, and appears completely to lose her head. Or does her real nature come to the surface, thanks to the savage excitement occasioned by fox-hunting?

Anyhow, the desire for distinction, which in a moderate degree may be regarded as a virtue, becomes in her case a foolish and

absorbing passion which makes her appear in the most unfavourable light.

It destroys her feminine qualities, and reduces her to the level of a very inferior man.

Moreover, it renders her a target for jeers, jests and sneers of every description.

If she only knew the truth, she might perhaps be brought to realize that in return for an indifferent, “Oh, ah! yes, she goes very hard,” this is all she gains.

She alienates her friends, and as the years pass becomes more and more isolated, until at last, when her turn comes to meet with a bad accident, the voice of public opinion exclaims : “What! nearly dead! Concussion of the brain—picked up insensible! Ah, well, serves her right. She always would ride so infernally jealous.”

What is the result? Her craving for admiration and pre-eminence ends in “serves her right.”

Misguided woman ! Before this harsh verdict is passed upon you can't you amend your ways ? It is not difficult. It is only to get into your head that nobody cares two straws what you do and what you don't do in the hunting field, except yourself. You are just as much an insignificant atom there as in the great big world. And whether the atom jumps this bullfinch or that, shirks one place, avoids another, passes a fellow atom, or is passed by it in return, what matters it ? A month—a year hence, and will not all your keen [rivalry appear very petty and very ridiculous ?



XIII.—THE BORE.

OF all the people we meet in the hunting field, if we were honestly to examine our feelings, the one we most dislike is probably the bore—the fellow whose words go in at one ear and out at the other, and who never has the sense or tact to perceive that his long-winded and interminable stories are infinitely wearisome to the listener.

And the worst of it is, there are so many bores about. The genus is so horribly common, and wherever men are gathered together, there they exist in numbers.

You fly from one only to fall headlong into the arms of another, and get involved in a second tedious narrative before you have time to shake off the unpleasant impression

produced by the first. On probing into the depths of human nature, many rare virtues and agreeable qualities are often discoverable; but the hardest thing of all to find is originality—that little fruitful germ of variation, removed from the vulgar type, which is closely allied to genius.

The bore has not a particle of originality in his whole composition. If he had he would be a character and not a bore. As it is, he is prosy and dull and commonplace to a degree almost past conception. If he *would* only hold his tongue; but, good Heavens! how the man talks. His jaws are never at rest. The subject of conversation he chooses is nearly always himself, or his immediate belongings. Though interesting, no doubt, to him, these topics are not equally so to you. The difficulty is to concentrate one's attention sufficiently to appear decently civil. You are seized by an irresistible inclination to listen to what the people all

about you are saying, and you feel unpleasantly conscious that your absent “exactly’s, just so’s and indeed’s,” lack the genuine ring of honest sympathy. The whole time that the unconscious bore is holding forth with great volubility and complacency, your entire energies are devoted to pondering over the best means of effecting an escape without doing violence to his susceptibilities. You wait breathlessly for a pause, which never seems to come. With the best will in the world, it is impossible to derive any pleasure from a conversation that is so entirely one-sided. No matter how it may have been started, the bore always works back to himself and *his* ideas, and utterly refuses to listen to yours. He is much too egotistical to allow of any reciprocity. If through some strange chance he asks a neighbour after his health, he does not wait to hear the reply, but immediately begins a long tirade about his own.

"Ah, my good sir, that was precisely what happened in my case. You remember the day I got that bad fall over timber? I have never recovered from the effects. I feel them constantly. The muscles of my back have been permanently injured. Rheumatism set in, and even now, every time there is a change in the weather, I can't tell you what agonies I suffer. I don't suppose anyone is such a martyr as I am. These east winds kill me. They pinch me up, take away my appetite, and upset my liver altogether. Cartwright ordered me to take podophyllin and taraxacum, but what's the good of that? One can't go on taking those sort of messes all one's life. Eh, what? you suffer too? Oh, ah! yes, very likely, very likely. By-the-by, did I tell you about my chestnut mare?"

So he runs on, and won't hearken to you when you try to put in a small word in return, and try to relate *your* experiences and *your* ailments.

The bore is a tremendous hand at dunning. He is always getting up penny readings and entertainments for his particular village, to which he expects all his acquaintances to subscribe. Now it is a church to be restored, anon a stained window to be set up, again, a testimonial to some parish authority whom you know nothing about. But rather than get inveigled into a conversation, you give him half-a-sovereign or a sovereign as the case may be, and fight shy of him for the rest of the season.

But if there is one time more than any other when you pray heart and soul to avoid falling into the clutches of the bore, that time is when hounds are busy drawing a covert. At such seasons, he literally button-holes you, and rambling on in his usual prosy manner, marches you up and down, up and down, until you are reduced to a state of white heat, and mentally apostrophize your companion whenever a whimper

proceeds from the pack. You find yourself compelled to listen to some long uninteresting narrative, instead of being able to dash off in pursuit the instant the fox breaks away. And so you probably lose your start and your temper both together, and use more forcible language than is desirable.

The majority of bores are grumblers as well. Finding fault is an amusement which gives their tongues a fine opportunity of wagging at other people's expense. Whenever sport is poor, they are the first to cry out, though by no means the hardest to ride. Nothing is rightly managed in their estimation. They are persuaded that if they had the direction of affairs each day would be productive of a brilliant run; but as they haven't, everything is in a state of muddle and confusion. To begin with, hounds are always too fat or too lean, too slack or too keen, too noisy or too mute. If they go fast, they ought to go

slow; if they go slow they ought to go fast. But the grumbler's peculiar scapegoat is the huntsman. That unfortunate individual, whether justly or unjustly, invariably comes in for condemnation. Epithet after epithet is heaped upon his devoted head. He is a blockhead, an idiot, a fool. Words fail to describe his shortcomings and crass stupidity. He can't hunt, he can't ride, he don't even know the run of a fox. He's as slow as an old woman, and as conceited as a young one.

Neither does the master escape censure. Indeed, indirectly he bears the brunt of the blows.

“He mounts the men badly. Their horses are a positive disgrace to the hunt. He has no notion of keeping the field in order, and always contrives to go to the wrong covert at the wrong time.”

In short, the grumbler is never satisfied. To express approbation would detract from

his dignity, at all events in his own estimation. No matter how good the sport, he invariably considers that it ought and would have been better had his precious advice only been adopted at the critical moment when hounds threw up their heads and came to the first check. He is ever ready to tender counsel; and one of his peculiarities consists in the extreme indignation he displays when he finds it ignored. For he is always convinced that he knows which way the hunted fox has gone, when the field and huntsman remain in ignorance as to its whereabouts. The grumbling bore is fortunate in one respect. He entertains a remarkably good opinion of himself, which nothing can shake.

As to arguing with him—it is perfectly useless. Just so much waste of breath, for he is essentially an obstinate man, and a narrow-minded one to boot. What *he* thinks, others must think, therefore discussion is to be

avoided, since he will talk his opponent's head off without giving him a chance to put in the most modest little word.

This is what renders his society so wearisome and uninteresting. Most people very naturally like to have their say and when they have listened patiently to somebody else's, feel that they are more or less entitled to express an opinion. But our friend proses and grumbles on without intermission, steadily adhering to his own pet subjects of conversation and entirely ignoring yours. Such egotism is disgusting and makes the heart contract with a sense of personal injury.

After he has told you all the ins and outs of his constitution, his stable and domestic experiences, it would be a relief to mention your own, but when you enter into details he hardly listens. This conduct is both provoking and irritating. The British sense of fair play is outraged. Whenever you meet him the same thing occurs. He is always full of

himself, or else of some fresh grievance. A new one is a luxury and he does not forsake it until it is worn quite threadbare. His relations with the Hunt are somewhat strained, as can easily be imagined. He and the master are not exactly on the best of terms. The master is not to blame ; for to keep the grumbling bore in a good humour is a task beyond the powers of any ordinary mortal. The greatest diplomatist could not succeed in averting an occasional storm. Those who know our friend intimately, have long since given up the attempt of pleasing him in despair, and declare he is never so happy as when finding fault. Altogether, he is far from being a cheerful companion, and the major portion of his fellow-sportsmen act with considerable discretion in giving him a wide berth, and in confining themselves to meteorological platitudes when forced for civility's sake to converse.

But the bore is an extremely dense indivi-

dual, and being endowed by nature with a very thick skin, does not notice fine shades of manner, or perceive when his absence is more desirable than his company. His want of sensitiveness often stands him in good stead, for not unfrequently he meets with a rebuff, which, however, he despairs to accept as such.

New-comers are to be pitied; for as a rule they fall a prey to him just like so many flies to a spider. It takes them some little time to find him out, and until that event occurs, they listen with a certain deference to his long tirades against the Hunt, the country, the master and the Hunt servants. They are even somewhat impressed at first by criticisms which seem to imply superior knowledge on the part of the critic and look up to him as an enlightened sportsman, whose oracular utterances command attention.

But this stage of hero-worship soon passes and before long they see their quondam friend

revealed in his true light. Stripped of all glamour, he appears as an inveterate grumbler and an unmitigated bore. A person to be shunned and avoided, and strongly discouraged whenever an outbreak of garrulity seems imminent.

“By Jove! here he comes,” they exclaim. “For Heaven’s sake, let’s escape whilst there is still time.” And so saying they stick spurs into their horses and gallop off as hard as they can lay legs to the ground, or else dodge round the nearest covert, or seek refuge in its muddy rides. Anywhere to avoid the inveterate grumbler, who ambles on ready to pounce upon the first victim who unwarily crosses his path.

He does not care one jot about the individual. All he wants is some target against which to rattle the small shot of his tongue. For he dearly loves the sound of it. As for sense, humour, interest, they are utterly deficient. He strings a quantity of words

together, which come dribbling out in an uninterrupted flow like water from a spout, but the stream is thin. He, however, is charmed with the result, and it never strikes him that his listener is not equally so.

For the bore is as egotistical as he is tiresome, and although there are a few people kind enough to sacrifice themselves for his benefit and who pretend to listen to his remarks, the majority of men and women are profoundly wearied by them.

For to bore modern society is the one fault most difficult to forgive, in spite of its commonness. Instinctively our spirits rise up in arms against the man whose long, prosy stories almost send us to sleep and are utterly destitute of point; stories that go rambling on for ever and ever. Dulness is an unpardonable sin, and even those who may not happen to be bright and witty themselves can appreciate these excellent qualities in others.

For humour is the salt of life. Without it the world would be but a sorry place to dwell in. We like what is cheerful and pleasant, and whether in the hunting field or anywhere else our term on earth is too short to encourage the bores and grumblers. We cannot beguile ourselves into the belief that they are good fellows, when half-an-hour's conversation with them gives us a regular fit of the blues and makes us look at everything through a pair of black spectacles. Even if our particular Hunt *has* faults, we do not always want to hear them dinned into our ears, and above all we object to being bored.

The process is one against which human nature rises up in revolt.

XIV—THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS NERVE.

NERVE and scent are two things equally indefinable. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow. No one knows the exact conditions on which they depend ; though since the first institution of hunting, many have sought to ascertain what qualities of temperament and weather are essential to their existence. Up till now the mystery remains a mystery, and the problem seems as far off solution as ever.

Sometimes on the most promising looking of mornings a fox won't run a yard, turning and twisting in every direction in covert, and completely baffling his pursuers. He may be a strong old patriarch, fit to show his white-tagged brush to the whole field. But no ! he

declines to do anything of the sort and is viciously sworn at as an unenterprising brute. On other occasions, when, as far as it is possible to judge, the conditions do not appear nearly so favourable—when it blows a perfect hurricane, accompanied by furious storms of sleet and snow, the little red rover literally revels in a scamper, stoutly defies the elements and leads those who have been bold enough to face them a pretty dance.

As for men, they are as deceptive as foxes every bit. A fine physique has nothing to do with nerve—at least it fails to ensure its presence. You see some great, big, healthy man with rosy cheeks, the limbs of a giant, and the digestion of an ostrich, and you say to yourself, “Fortunate mortal! Surely he does not know the meaning of the word fear.” But you are mistaken. He clings soberly to the roads and gates, and rarely jumps except under disagreeably high pressure. In short he objects to the process and considers it far

too dangerous to be pleasant. He hunts to enjoy himself and not to commit suicide in a delicate fashion which shall afford his friends no apprehensions as to the state of his immortal soul. It is wiser policy to take care of that valuable organ on earth. So reasons the giant. On the other hand some long, lank, frail-looking individual whose appearance certainly leads you to suppose that he has already one foot in the grave, goes like a demon, and repeatedly charges impossible fences which no living horse can clear. This fact creates but few misgivings. He is prepared every day he goes out to take innumerable falls and regards anything under half-a-dozen as quite an insignificant number, not worth talking about. For a time he goes on gaily; tumbling and picking himself up, being reprimanded by the master for constantly over-riding and periodically killing his hounds, and eliciting divided abuse, condemnation and praise from the field in

general. One calls him a fool, another pronounces him a “d——d young idiot,” and a third has no words to express his admiration for such magnificent courage. The majority, however, are convinced he is a madman, and take a spiteful delight in prophesying that he will soon come to what they call his bearings. This generally means a desire to see him “funk” like themselves and no longer put them to shame by his gallant deeds. The truth is, jealousy and blame are curiously allied in the minds of most people. A jealous person will generally remark severely on the doings of those he professes to despise, but in reality envies ; whilst an indifferent one holds his tongue and is not put out because so-and-so has the audacity to jump right under his nose, when personally he may have the desire but not the courage to follow his example. Oddly enough, in most instances, the predictions of the malicious prove correct. Our friend *does* come to his bearings—that is to

say, after riding for a time as if he bore a charmed life, the day arrives when he gets a nasty fall and hurts himself badly. He has often hurt himself before, but always slightly. On the present occasion his horse rolls heavily over him, struggles, plunges, and leaves him lying on the ground with a broken leg and several severe contusions. He suffers agonies on the homeward drive. The fly is jolty, its springs deficient and every yard of the road seems patched with stones, which increase his pain a thousand-fold. He grows dizzy and once or twice is on the point of fainting.

Three months elapse before he is sufficiently recovered to take the saddle again. During the long weary weeks which he has been forced to spend in bed or lying full length on the sofa, his memory is haunted by the shock, the fall, and those brief but agonizing moments, when the horse rolled backwards and forwards over him and he fully expected to be killed. Impossible to wipe out the recol-

lection. It is photographed on his brain in dark, unlovely colours, and although he would give all the world to get rid of the disagreeable impression, stamped so strongly on his mind, he can't.

The season is drawing to a close when he reappears in the hunting field, looking frightfully pale, fragile and emaciated. Every one pities him and he has a most legitimate excuse for merely hacking about and not riding as of yore. He comes out on a quiet cob expressly purchased for the purpose—a creature guaranteed not to cock its ears, whisk its tail or even blink its eye uncomfortably. Jogging sedately along the roads, or—as he gets better—popping over an occasional gap, our invalid is much astonished to find what a relief it is to be on the sick list and not expected to perform feats of valour. He feels as if a load had been removed from his shoulders, leaving him a free man, who no longer, every time he goes out hunting, is

weighted by a crushing sense of obligation. For be it known, reputation is not the glittering jewel that it seems. It has its drawbacks in the hunting field as everywhere else, since fame is easier to acquire in the first instance, than to sustain. A single gallant action is frequently sufficient to bring renown, but it entails a long series of efforts to prevent that action from being forgotten. Therefore a hard-rider must continually be on his mettle. There is no greater mistake than thinking, "I can rest on my laurels." Other people win fresh ones and yours soon become old and faded if you do not exert yourself.

Meanwhile our poor young friend is conscious of a subtle alteration in his mental condition. He begins to find himself looking critically at the fences, examining their top-binders, and for the first time thinking how uncommonly wide and ugly the ditches appear. Luckily no one, not even his bosom friends, are aware of the daily increasing

dread of danger growing up within his breast, like some foul and poisonous fungus. The season drags to an end, as far as he is concerned, and his fame remains untarnished. The bubble is expanding, but has not yet burst. His comrades expect nothing from him. They unite in saying, "Poor fellow! how ill he looks. He really ought not to come out hunting. If he'd only give his leg a chance, it would be all right for next season."

Alas! throughout the summer that unfortunate downfall still lingers in his thoughts. The impression, though not so acute, refuses to fade. It rests in the background of his mind, rising to the surface whenever matters equine are discussed. Often at night he dreams of four brown heels flourishing before his eyes, and in fancy feels once more that sleek but heavy body pinning him to the ground, causing a strangely dead sensation to creep up his right leg. Nevertheless, when winter

approaches, the injured limb has grown perfectly well, and he repairs as usual to his accustomed hunting quarters, trying to deceive himself into the belief that he is very keen. On the way down the country seems to him desperately blind—much more so than in ordinary seasons. The very look of it is enough to frighten one, but the strong will that in years past has carried him over so many formidable fences now resolves to keep his fears secret. Unhappy man! In spite of good resolutions he cannot succeed altogether in acting up to them.

Before long it begins to be whispered amongst his former companions of the chase—those gallant and select spirits who give prestige to every hunt—that Z—— is not going quite so hard as usual. The first man states the fact with considerable hesitation. He feels that it is equivalent to taking Z——'s character away—a kind of public confession that he has dropped from grace and retreated

into the despised ranks of “*the mob!*” But the answer comes decisive from half-a-dozen pairs of stern, masculine lips. “Oh! yes, we’ve noticed it. We’ve noticed it for some time. Didn’t you remark how he shirked that big bottom on the opening day, when we ran as fast as hounds could race from Cross-trees to Lockthorpe? There was no excuse. Poor Z——, I’m afraid he’s settled.” This half-mournfully, half-complacently. They exult in the thought that they themselves remain *unsettled*, yet inwardly wonder when their turn will come, and whether it will produce the same result.

In process of time rumours of his failing nerve reach Z——’s ears. He is frightfully annoyed by them, little guessing that they are already spread amongst all the field. Their effect is to make him feel under a cloud and to goad him to renewed exertion. For the next week or ten days he puts on a tremendous spurt, and almost rides up to

his old form. But just when his nerve seems really about to improve, he gets another spill which, although unattended by any evil consequences, once more wakes the old fears into life. He cannot help it. He knows they are ridiculous, unworthy indeed of a man, but still they gain the ascendancy. Struggle as he may he fails to conquer them. They fasten on him like a tormenting creditor appearing at the most inconvenient moment.

Meanwhile his stud-groom, from whom he is particularly anxious to conceal any symptoms of degeneracy, is perfectly aware of what is taking place. One after another Z—— brings the old favourite hunters home that he has ridden for years, with the same pitiful tale. They pull, they refuse ; they refuse, they pull. There is no longer any satisfaction to be derived from them. Past virtues are swallowed up by present shortcomings and all their good points have disappeared.

The pride of Z——'s stable is a thoroughbred chestnut mare, a beauty to look at, and perfect in every respect, at least so her master has always declared until now. He has ridden her for four seasons and, marvellous to relate, she has never put him down through her own fault. She is an extraordinary fencer, big and bold, who does not know what it is to turn her head, and her only fault when hounds run hard is a very pardonable one. She must and will be with them. This year Z—— affirms that she pulls his arms off. The fact is, he is afraid to let her go.

"It's very odd, Wilkinson," he says to his head man in tones of confidential injury, "but I can't hold Queen Bee. I don't know what's come to her. She's a different animal altogether from what she was in the early part of last season."

"Indeed, sir," responds Wilkinson diplomatically. "I am sorry to hear that, for the mare is fit and well."

He is a man of tact, and, making a pretty shrewd guess at what is amiss, smothers a smile. Z—— is a kind master, and he has a comfortable berth.

“I tell you, Wilkinson,” continues Z—— unsuspiciously, “that it’s an infernally unpleasant thing going out hunting and feeling yourself being run away with at every fence.”

“No doubt it is, sir. The mare hasn’t done much work as yet, and perhaps she’s a bit above herself. We must send her out oftener, that’s all. You can ride her second ‘oss on Thursday if you like. She’ll have settled down by then.”

“Yes, I think I will,” says Z——. “After all, there’s no pleasure in riding a pulling, tearing brute who never leaves you alone.”

“How would it be to put a stronger bit on her, sir ?” suggests Wilkinson in a most respectful and sympathetic manner.

Z—— catches at the idea.

"By all means," he replies. "I believe a stronger bit would just make all the difference."

So the next time the mare goes out orders are issued to this effect. When the day arrives, after many inward struggles, Z—— decides to ride as first horse an animal lent him on trial by a neighbouring dealer; his intention being to mount Queen Bee as soon as she has quieted down a bit. Owing to a mistake on the part of the mare's strapper, she is sent to the meet with her ordinary bridle, whilst about half a ton of steel is placed in the mouth of the stranger. Fortunately Z—— knows nothing of this, and when he gets on the mare, being under the impression that she is restrained by a powerful lever against which she finds it impossible to pull, allows her to stride along at her will, with the result of holding her perfectly easily.

"Well, sir; how have you got on?" in-

quires Wilkinson curiously, when his master comes riding into the stable yard.

"First rate. I never was carried better in my life. Queen Bee is quite in her old form."

"Come, that's all right," answers the gratified Wilkinson, going to the mare's head while Z—— dismounts.

In the twinkling of an eye he perceives that his orders have not been carried out regarding the bit. He deserves great credit, for, in this delicate situation, he has the extreme good sense to refrain from mentioning the circumstance.

"Did she pull you at all, sir?" he asks, looking as sober as a judge.

"No, not an ounce. Remember, Wilkinson, always to put that bit on to Queen Bee in future. It suits her down to the ground."

"Yes, sir," says Wilkinson; but as his master walks away he shakes his head and looks after him with a regretful sigh. "Ah!"

he soliloquizes, “I’ve had my suspicions for a long time, but now the whole thing is as clear as the nose on one’s face. The mare’s no more in fault nor me. What we wants this season is what we had a little too much of afore the guvnor got that unlucky spill and broke his leg. He’s a-losing of his nerve, more’s the pity—more’s the pity, for at one time a gallanter gentleman never went out hunting, though every now and again he *was* a little too rough on his ‘osses.” So saying Wilkinson delivers the beautiful Queen Bee to her particular strapper, whilst he hurries off to personally superintend the mixing of her gruel.

Another person who quickly learns poor Z——’s secret is the dealer with whom he is accustomed to deal. In olden days never was a customer so easy to satisfy. If only horses could gallop Z—— soon taught them to jump. It was as if he infused into their hearts something of his own gallant spirit.

But now it is almost impossible to suit him. He has grown fastidious to a degree. The truth is, he hardly knows what he wants, or rather he wants so much that no single animal can combine all the requisite qualities. It must gallop, it must jump, it must stay, be smooth in its paces, have perfect manners, neither kick, buck, nor do anything disagreeable, whilst its age shall not be less than five nor more than seven. Meanwhile poor Z—— has such a nervous horror of riding a new horse, that he will not try one sufficiently to discover its merits. On the other hand, he grows sharper and sharper at finding out its *demerits*. If the animal goes boldly at his fences, he calls him a rushing, tearing brute; if after being pulled up, he declines to jump, Z—— declares he is a rank refuser, and if the steady-going beast is so docile as to take no notice of the electric current of fear, communicated from his rider's hands to the corners of his sensitive mouth, he is dubbed either a sluggard or a

cur. In short, Z—— wants a wonder. A few exist, but they are very hard to find, and even money cannot purchase them the very moment they are wanted.

Z—— requires his ideal hunter to be fleet as the wind, yet not to pull an ounce ; bold as a lion, yet to go lamb-like at his fences, and to possess a courageous and generous nature, which, however, indulges in no inconvenient light-heartedness. Where is such a horse to be found ? Z—— chops and changes, with the result that he outwears the dealer's patience, and at the end is decidedly worse off, both in money and horseflesh, than he was at the beginning. His friendly dealer does his best to please him. No efforts are wanting on his part, for Z—— has not only been a good customer for many years, but also a first-rate advertisement. Indirectly he has put many hundred pounds into his pocket. He begins by sending him sound fresh young horses of the class he has bought

up till now. They certainly require a little making, but hitherto Z—— has never failed to turn them into brilliant hunters. Next, he tries him with something older and steadier, without giving any greater satisfaction ; and at last, in despair, falls back upon a regular old gentleman's quadruped, strong, plain, underbred, but guaranteed absolutely sober of conduct. A year ago Z—— would not have had such a hippopotamus at a gift. He might have called him an ornament to an omnibus, but certainly not to the hunting field. Now he declares him to be a really comfortable mount, and eventually purchases old Sobersides for a sum about three times his worth.

So Z—— goes on from bad to worse. Every year his nerve becomes shakier, until at last he almost gives up jumping altogether. The process is subtle, but he traces its commencement to that disastrous fall, which to this day he has never forgotten. Ten years

from the time he first entered the county and took field, master, huntsman by storm, he is reduced to the necessity of being accompanied by a groom, whose duty it is to precede his master over every gap, and prove to him by ocular demonstration that it contains no lurking danger.

Shall we give a final view of poor Z——?

One day, when hounds were running very hard, he came across a diminutive ditch. The fence had almost completely disappeared owing to the number of horses which had passed over it. Z—— happened to be at the very tail of an attenuated line of sportsmen, for the pace was great, and many steeds had succumbed to it.

“Hey!” he called out to his groom, who was a little behind, “you go first, and give me a lead.”

The man did as desired, and waited for his master to follow. Whereupon Z—— took a tremendous pull at the reins, leant timorously

forward in the saddle, hunched his shoulders, rounded his back, and in fear and trembling set his horse at the gap. That sagacious animal, however, probably possessing a delicate perception of his rider's frame of mind, refused. Z—— pretended to whack him—he was in much too great a fright to do so really—but Sobersides opposed the castigation, light as it was, with dogged obstinacy. The fact was, Z—— had got hold of him so tight by the head, that he could not see where he was going. Then Z—— vented his wrath upon the human animal. It was considerably safer, and did not expose him to the risk of being unseated.

“Here, you d——d fool,” he exclaimed irritably to his groom, “what’s the good of standing there grinning, just as if there were anything to grin at. Come, jump back again, and get on this brute of mine, whilst I mount Patrician.”

The man immediately obeyed orders, and lo! to Z——'s surprise, Sobersides popped over the gap without demur.

But now, what had come to Patrician? The horse seemed to have taken leave of his senses, for he proved even more refractory than Sobersides. He not only firmly declined to jump, but got on his hind legs and showed the most abominable temper. It was more than Z—— could stand. Every moment he thought he should be crushed to death. At the first lull, he slipped from the saddle in a desperate hurry.

“What the devil is the matter with the brute?” he asked indignantly of the groom, who promptly rejoined his master.

“I think if you would give ‘im ‘is ‘ead, sir,” suggested the man. “ ’Ee’s a ‘oss as likes to go very free at his fences.”

“Give him his head! What do you mean? He might have jumped over and over again had he liked. Do you suppose I don’t know

when a horse shows temper? To-morrow morning he shall be packed off to the place he came from."

"It's a'most a pity, sir. 'Ee's a good 'oss, a very good 'oss. If you'd try 'im again—"

"Try him again. Not I. Not for ten thousand pounds. I've had enough of the beast. The fact is, he ain't my sort."

Whether our friend Z—— ever succeeded in getting over that gap, history does not tell. but when his mortified companion reached home he lost no time in communicating the humiliating tale to Wilkinson.

That worthy pursed up his lips.

"Look here, John," he said, "don't you put yourself about. It isn't your fault, or Patrician's either, we all know that. He's as good a hunter as ever looked through a bridle, but when a gentleman 'as lost his nerve as completely as our guvnor, why, then, in my hopinion, it's time for him to give up

hunting. It's first this one wrong, then that, until I declare a man has no pride left in his 'osses. I'm a plain, 'ard-working fellow, but if I could present my master with ten pound worth of nerve-powder, why, I'd do it to-morrow."

And now the question comes, why does courage evaporate with some, whilst others may hunt and tumble to the end of a long life, and never lose their nerve?

Z—— is not to be sneered at. He was not responsible for the change that took place within him, and for a long time valiantly battled with his fears. That eventually he succumbed to them was his misfortune rather than his fault. No "funk-stick" he, from birth, yet in some mysterious fashion a single nasty accident threw his whole nervous system out of gear. The inquiring mind cries out, "Why, why? Oh! give me the reason?"

But answer there is none. Only we agree

with Wilkinson, that when a man has lost his nerve so completely as Z——, it is wiser for him to retire from the chase. There is no greater mistake than letting what ought to be a pleasure degenerate into pain, and submitting to the yoke, simply through force of habit. Say boldly, “My nerve is gone. I’m giving up hunting,” and nobody will care in the least. There are always plenty to take your place.

THE END.

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